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FM 18-22

WAR DEPARTMENT FIELD MANUAL

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TANK DESTROYER RECONNAISSANCE PLATOON

WAR DEPARTMENT • NOVEMBER 1944

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FM 18–22

TANK DESTROYER RECONNAISSANCE PLATOON

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FM 18–22, Tank Destroyer Reconnaissance Platoon, is published for the information and guidance of all concerned.

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BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

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Chief of Staff.

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The Adjutant General.

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SECTION I

GENERAL

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1. **SCOPE.** a. This manual covers the tactical employment of the tank destroyer reconnaissance platoon and includes descriptions of certain techniques not covered in other manuals. It applies to the reconnaissance platoons of both the towed and self-propelled battalions. All reference to the duties and control responsibilities of the reconnaissance company commander of the self-propelled battalion applies equally well to the reconnaissance officer of the towed battalion.

b. The manual is designed as a guide only and does not lay down a set of inflexible rules. All commanders must be encouraged to solve each tactical situation according to the factors involved.

2. **MISSIONS.** a. The reconnaissance platoon executes missions of ground reconnaissance and security.

b. Specifically the platoon executes—

(1) Route reconnaissance, particularly of those routes over which the gun companies will move to reach combat areas.

(2) Area reconnaissance, particularly to locate general areas suitable for use as combat areas by the gun companies.

(3) Zone reconnaissance, to search the area ahead of the battalion, or elements thereof, as it advances.

(4) Battle reconnaissance, to gain and maintain contact with the enemy.

(5) Security missions as advance, flank, and rear guards, and as outguards and listening posts for the battalion.

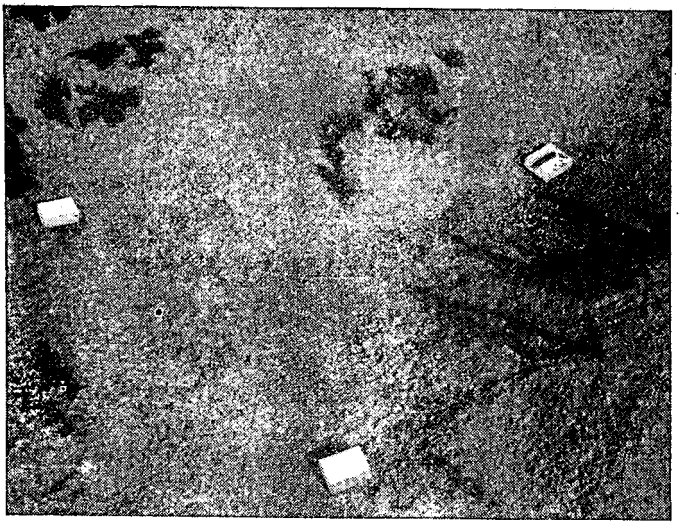
(6) Counterreconnaissance to screen the battalion from hostile observation.

3. **TRAINING.** a. Reconnaissance personnel are trained to be aggressive in seeking information. A reconnaissance element fights to protect itself or to accomplish its mission. It operates by stealth when possible to accomplish its mission without fighting.

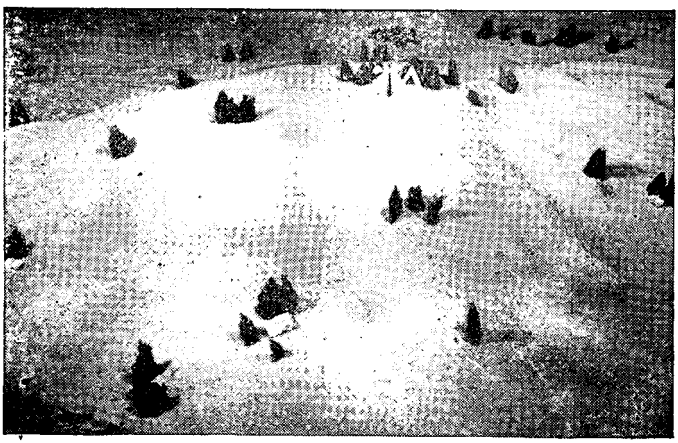
b. Particularly, reconnaissance personnel must be trained to return *accurate* information *speedily.*

c. The ability to use the ground must be developed through practice. *Terrain plots* are a valuable training aid. These may be as simple or as elaborate as time and facilities permit. The only essentials are that the terrain plots show ground forms and some terrain features in miniature. When a built-up terrain plot is not available, a few shovelfuls of dirt shaped into ground forms, or a blanket thrown on a table or on the floor and crumpled into hills and valleys give good results. Terrain plots, or any simple substitute, are valuable not only for training in selecting routes and observation posts but also in preliminary training in the execution of combat formations.

d. This field manual covers only a small part of what reconnaissance personnel must learn, but it is an important part. Individual training in the many subjects a soldier must know is covered in other field manuals. This manual shows how the individuals of a platoon work together to form a team.



① *Hasty terrain plot.*



② *Elaborate terrain plot.*

Figure 1. Terrain plots.

4. EQUIPMENT. The text and illustrations contained herein are based upon current tables of organization and equipment. (See T/O & E 18–28 and 18–36.) These tables may change; however, the methods and principles described in this manual will still be applicable.

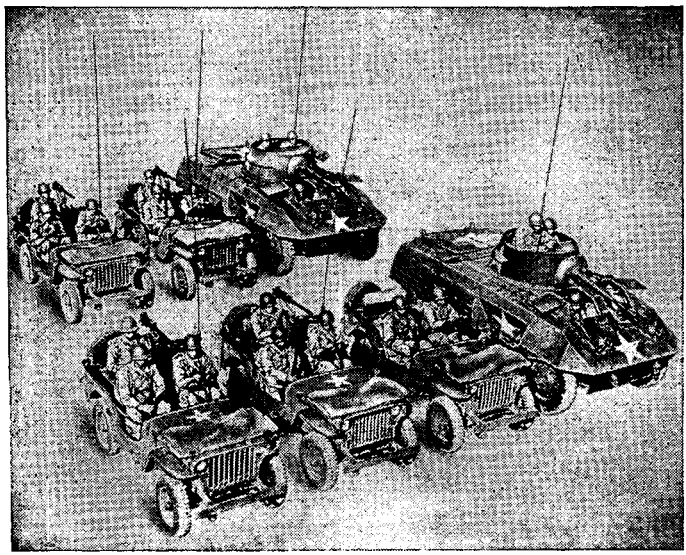


Figure 2. Equipment (T/O & E 18–28 and 18–36).

SECTION II

MARCHES

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5. GENERAL. Successful engagements begin with successful marches. The reconnaissance platoon that has obtained and returned accurate and timely information has proved that each responsible individual in the platoon—officer, sergeant, corporal, private—has paid continuous attention to details during movements. The overall supervision—contact with all vehicles, control of distances, vehicle operation, conduct of personnel, maintenance, supply, and planning ahead—is the platoon leader's function. The execution, however, depends on the key enlisted personnel. Vehicle commanders take energetic and active control of their vehicle. They enforce march and light discipline. They see that crew maintenance, camouflage, and security are automatic at halts. They see that their vehicles and crews conform in all respects to special instructions or to standing operating procedures. Each man in the platoon must know what his job is on the march and how to do it.

6. MARCH DUTIES. The following lists of duties before and during movements are to be used as a guide and should be amplified or modified as experience warrants:

a. **Platoon leader** is responsible for and supervises the execution of—

(1) Alerting the platoon or patrol and issuing the warning order.

(2) Checking weapons and equipment; maintaining vehicles and ammunition, fuel, and ration supply.

(3) Checking the radio net.

(4) Inspecting the platoon or patrol and issuing the final order. Making certain that all personnel know the situation, route, and destination; issuing overlays or sketches of routes and phase lines when time is available for their preparation.

(5) Intervehicular distance (column or dispersed formations).

(6) Observance of blackout instructions.

(7) Clearing roads and proper use of cover and concealment at halts.

(8) Maintenance, resupply, and security at halts.

(9) Maintenance of prescribed speed.

(10) Being oriented as to the platoon's location at all times by observation of terrain, by maps, and by noting odometer distances.

(11) Investigating the cause of unscheduled halts and reporting the cause thereof to the company commander.

(12) Causing all the platoon vehicles to move at resumption of marches, especially at night.

(13) Maintaining contact with adjacent units, when such contact has been indicated.

b. Platoon sergeant. Performs the duties listed in a above under direction of the platoon leader.

c. Section sergeant. (1) Alerts section.

(2) Sees that all members of his section or patrol are thoroughly familiar with their specific assignments, or mission.

(3) Checks weapons and equipment to be used. Includes a special check to insure that all weapons are in operating order and that ammunition supply is on hand.

(4) Checks his vehicles for maintenance, equipment, fuel, and rations.

(5) Checks radios.

(6) Maintains control over his section during movement.

(7) Passes on to his section all orders from the platoon leader.

(8) Relays all prearranged signals to his section.

(9) Provides security on march and at halts as directed by the platoon leader.

(10) Checks that his vehicles are properly concealed, camouflaged, and dispersed when halted.

(11) Maintains blackout discipline.

(12) Checks that drivers are awake at night halts.

(13) Maintains contact with adjacent section when required.

(14) Rotates duties of personnel of his section to provide sufficient rest for all.

d. Gunner. (1) Maintains and operates the 37-mm gun.

(2) Checks the ammunition supply.

(3) Assists platoon leader or platoon sergeant in other duties as directed.

e. Radio operator. (1) Checks that radio is properly netted and in operating condition.

(2) Maintains radio.

(3) Maintains a log of outgoing and incoming messages.

(4) Is thoroughly versed in the SOI of the unit.

(5) Assists in any other duties as prescribed by the platoon leader.

f. Driver. (1) Responsible for operation and first echelon maintenance of his vehicle.

(2) Utilizes maximum cover in movement.

(3) Keeps vehicle in proper gear so that the maximum acceleration can be obtained when necessary.

(4) Remains with the vehicle when halted and dismounts only when directed.

(5) Mans the vehicular weapons or operates radio when he is the only member of the crew left with the vehicle at a halt.

(6) Assists in other duties as prescribed.

7. **FORMATIONS** (fig. 3). a. Some reconnaissance formations are:

(1) *Column.*

(2) *"V."* This formation is preferable in most cases. It provides for control during medium or wide dispersion and affords maximum protection and mutual fire support within the units.

(3) *Diamond.* This formation is used where both flanks are exposed; it facilitates maneuver towards either flank or to the front.

(4) *Wedge.* The wedge formation offers ease of control, maximum amount of fire power available immediately, and easy maintenance of direction.

(5) *Column of sections.* This formation is used chiefly for road movements. Each section may be in column, "V," or other formation.

(6) *Line of sections.* Formations in line are used to cover a broad front. Individual sections may be in column, "V," or other formation.

(7) *Echeloned section.* Echelon formations extend in the direction of an exposed flank and lend themselves to quick maneuver in that direction as well as to the front.

b. Formations must be practiced and repracticed until the platoon is perfect in their execution. Formations are always adapted to the ground and to the presence of other troops, friendly and enemy.

8. **ADVANCE BY BOUNDS** (fig. 4). a. To advance by bounds, one element of a unit halts and covers by observation or fire the advance of the other element of the unit. When the moving element reaches a terrain feature beyond which it cannot be supported by the covering element, it halts and the covering element joins it. This operation is repeated until the unit reaches its objective.

b. Movements of the platoon, when alone in the vicinity of the enemy, are best executed by bounds. Such movements,

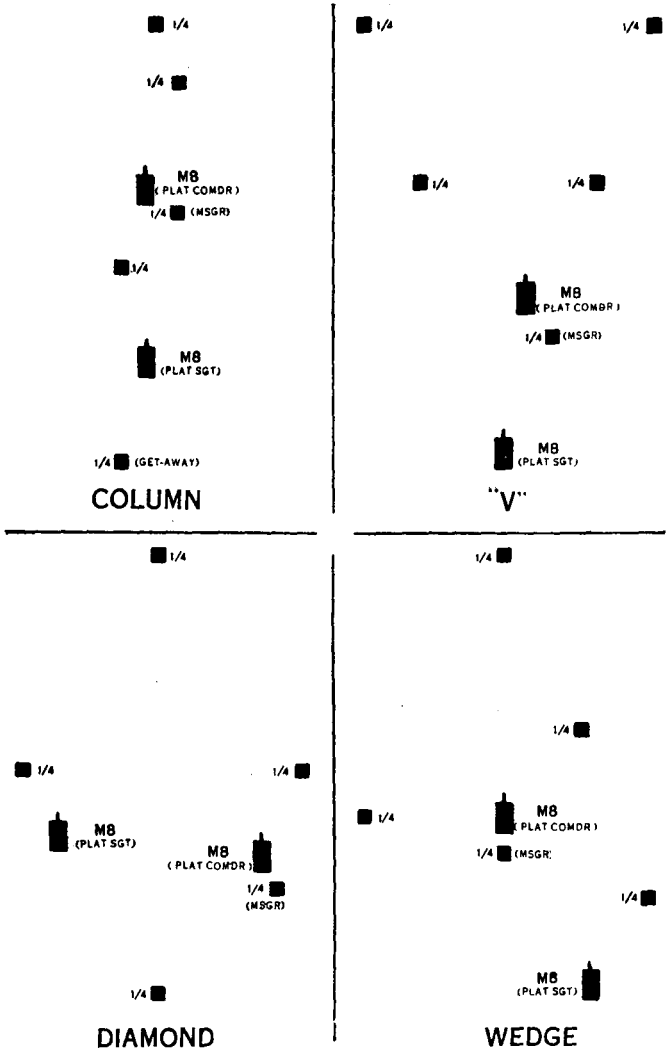


Figure 3. Formations.

skillfully executed, tend to prevent casualties from enemy ambush.

c. When the troops following the platoon must move rapidly to arrive at their destination on time, the platoon cannot take the time required for movement by bounds. In this situation, the platoon protects itself from surprise by dispersion frontally and laterally.

9. SECURITY DURING MARCHES. a. While on the march, the reconnaissance platoon leader provides for the security of his unit by the dispersion of vehicles, rapid movement across open spaces, movement by bounds, observation, the use of covered and concealed routes, avoidance of dust, detouring defiles where possible, camouflage discipline, strict compliance with blackout instructions, maintenance of radio silence, and the elimination of all unnecessary noise and traffic.

b. When the platoon moves alone or in open formation in the presence of the enemy, it provides its own security. The unit habitually moves by bounds, halts being made on distinct terrain features, usually just behind ridges or on phase lines, taking advantage of high ground from which to observe. Individual vehicles move rapidly from one position of observation and concealment to the next. When contact is imminent and the time is available, mounted reconnaissance is preceded by dismounted observation—the observer running or crawling ahead of the vehicle and then signaling the vehicle to advance.

c. Security against air attack on the march is gained by dispersion and alertness. When road space is available and control can be effectively maintained, intervehicular distance of about 175 yards is desirable.

d. Prior to the beginning of the march, instructions will be issued whether to halt or to keep moving in the event of an air attack. Troops must be constantly prepared for immediate action against low-flying aircraft, but will fire only upon order of an officer or responsible noncommissioned officer. *No air-*

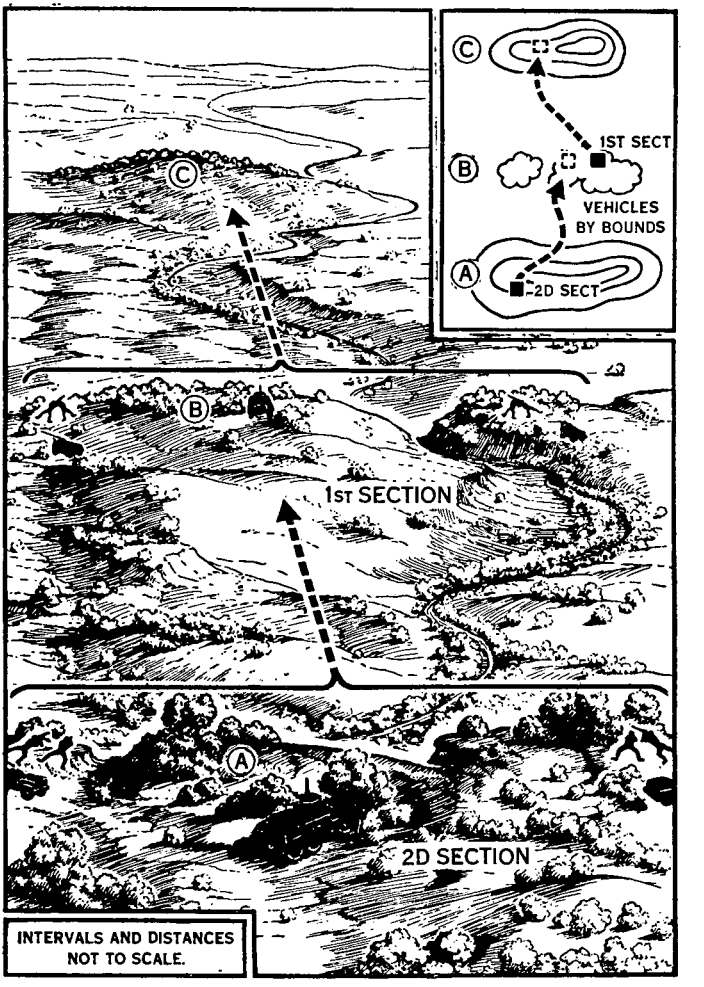


Figure 4. Advance by bounds. (Second section is shown covering first section in position. Prior to movement of first section to "C," second section arrives at "B" to cover forward displacement of first section.)

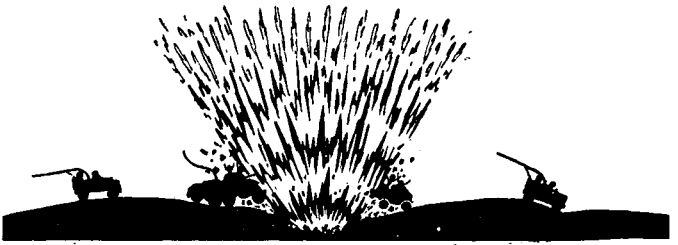
craft will be fired upon unless it has been clearly recognized as hostile or positively identified as hostile, or attacks with bombs or gun fire. Commanders of all echelons personally are responsible that the above instructions are observed. (See FM 100–5.) When troops halt during air attack vehicles leave the road as far as possible and halt under available concealment; troops not manning antiaircraft weapons dismount and disperse; personnel fire all suitable weapons at the attacking aircraft. Pistols, carbines, and submachine guns are not considered effective. When movement is continued, vehicles maintain distances on road or, if terrain permits, disperse laterally while continuing the forward movement.

e. Vehicles cannot afford to stop every time enemy planes appear. Such halting would enable a few planes to prevent the performance of the platoon mission on time.

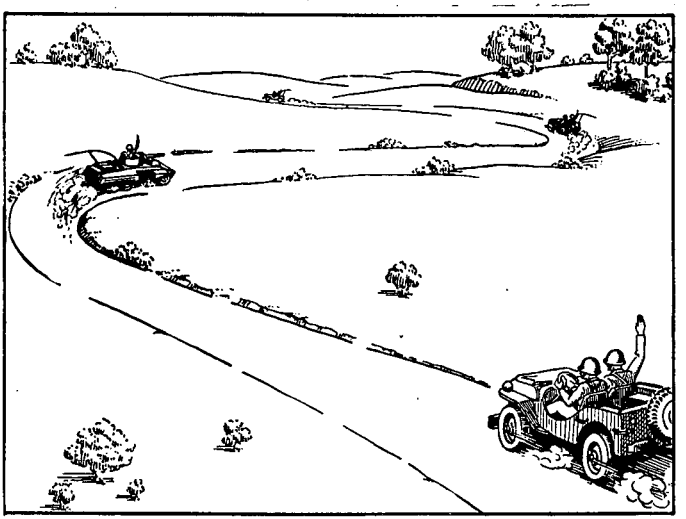
10. HALTS DURING MARCHES. a. All platoon personnel are kept busy at the halt unless the purpose is to rest. Normally, resting is done only in bivouac. The platoon leader immediately determines that security measures are taken. These measures include dispersion and concealment of vehicles and personnel and, in the presence of the enemy, the establishing of observation and listening posts covering all possible routes of surprise approach. He then personally checks the condition of all vehicles and the execution of maintenance activities.

b. If the reason for the halt is not clear, the platoon leader investigates the cause and notifies the proper authority. Contact with elements ahead should be maintained. A driver who falls asleep or loses sight of the vehicle ahead may not only lose himself but an entire column.

c. If the halt is to be prolonged, the reconnaissance platoon may be ordered to establish a march outpost by moving forward or to the flank to cover a part of the command from enemy observation.



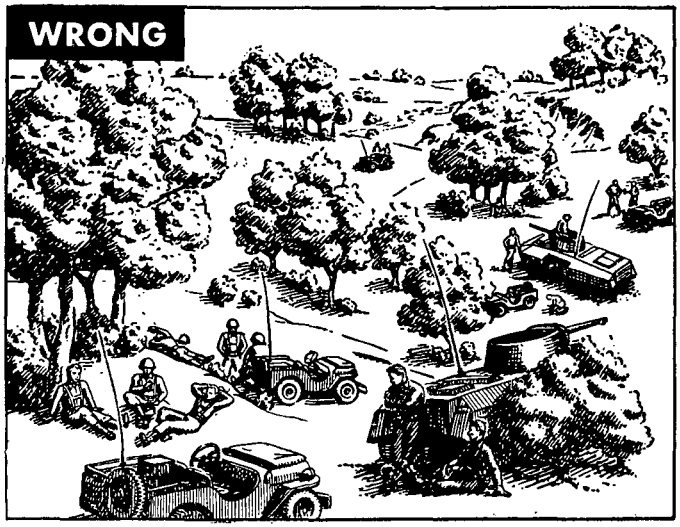
① *Result of careless marching.*



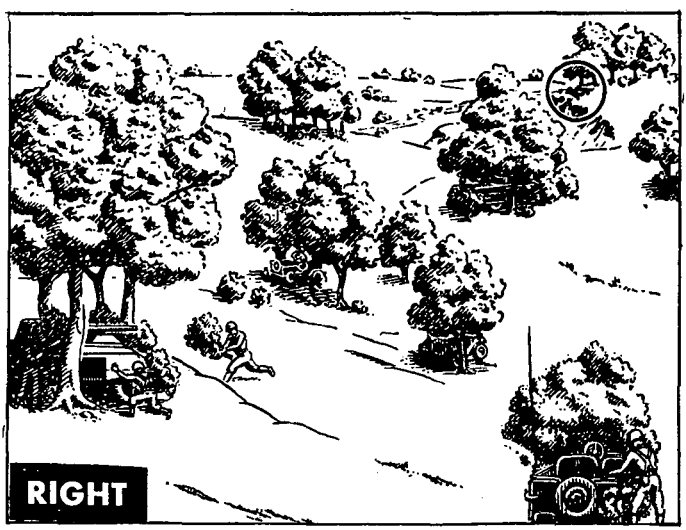
② *Good marching.*

③ *Serious bomb damage seldom results when men are alert and dispersed.*

Figure 5. March security.



① *Wrong. Loafing, no observation, bunching in open.*



② *Right. Purposeful activity, observation, dispersion.*

Figure 6. Halts.

SECTION III

BIVOUACS

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11. SECURING OF AREAS PRIOR TO OCCUPATION. **a.** A reconnaissance platoon may be used to secure an area which the battalion is to occupy. To assure that there are no hostile elements within the area, a thorough reconnaissance must first be made. Mined or contaminated areas are marked and reported. A ¼-ton truck and crew should be left in observation of the reconnoitered area until the area is occupied by the destroyer elements.

b. Having reconnoitered the area, the reconnaissance platoon then moves beyond the area a sufficient distance to establish a security screen. This mission may be accomplished by selection of high ground which offers good observation, and from which adequate and timely warning of the approach of hostile elements may be given. At night, listening posts are established in possible avenues of hostile approach. A warning system is employed. In the event of an enemy attack, reconnaissance platoons delay the hostile elements as well as warn the battalion.

12. OCCUPATION OF BIVOUACS. **a.** The essential requirement during movement into bivouac is speed in clearing the road and finding cover and concealment. To facilitate getting into the platoon area the platoon leader should precede his unit so that he can meet the vehicles as they enter and personally direct them to their positions. When this cannot be done, a noncommissioned officer should be sent ahead. The

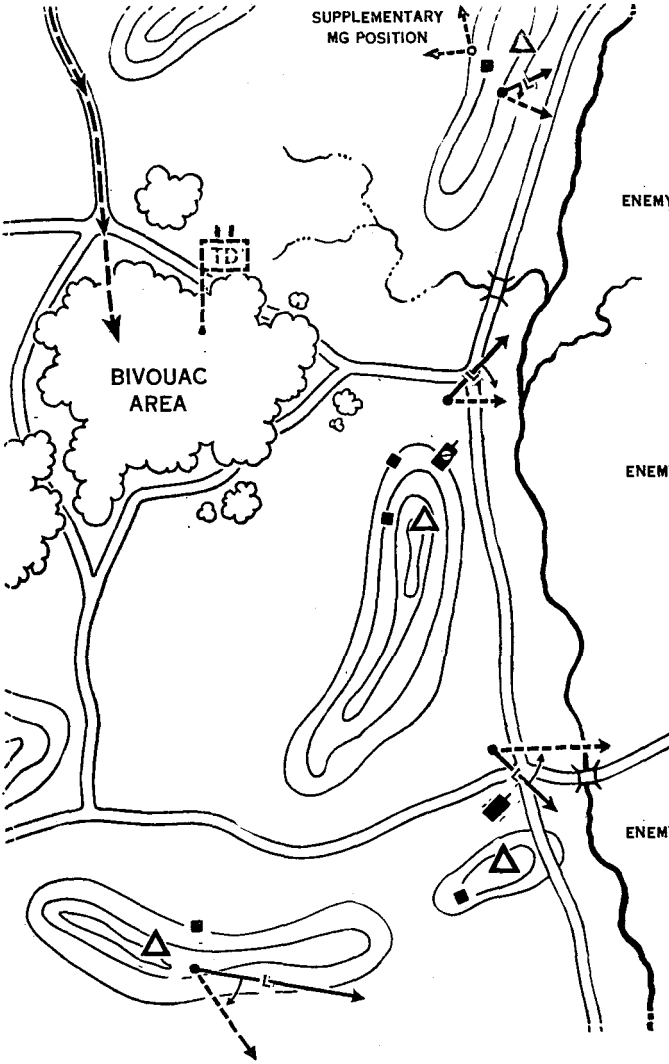


Figure 7. Reconnaissance platoon as ***march outpost.***

object is to clear the road and get under cover—original positions may be improved later.

b. (1) Occupation of bivouac is facilitated by the use of a standard platoon plan. When occupying an area alone, vehicles are disposed so that their weapons furnish all round protection of the area. The nearer that disposition can approach a circle, the easier it will be to occupy and secure the area. In the event the platoon occupies a portion of the battalion perimeter, all armored vehicles move to the edge of the area and halt facing outward. They should be concealed from ground and air observation and protected by dismounted members of the crew. Machine guns are dismounted, sighted, and half loaded. Routes are selected for movements of armored cars to firing positions. Range cards are prepared, the platoon command post established, routes marked for night use, and plans for night action completed.

(2) When the platoon occupies a position inside the bivouac perimeter the vehicles should be faced in the direction in which they may be required to move and should not be placed in positions which require them to back out. The area should be large enough to permit all vehicles to disperse under cover and should have at least two exits. The platoon should be disposed within the area so that vehicles may move out promptly in the formation ordered.

13. SECURITY AND SAFETY IN BIVOUAC. a. The platoon establishes security measures including outposts, dispersion, concealment, camouflage and blackout discipline automatically. (For bivouac security in general see FM 18–5.) If the platoon bivouacs alone, it establishes all round security. Outposts for platoons usually consist of outguards only. Outposts should be far enough out to give the unit time enough to prepare for combat. When the platoon occupies a portion of the perimeter of a higher unit's bivouac, it may be assigned a security sector and if so establishes outguards. The mission

of the outpost is to warn of surprise attack by hostile armor, to stop any attack by enemy troops which are vulnerable to small arms fire, and to prevent infiltration into the area. They maintain liaison, whenever possible, with more advanced observation and listening posts established by other units and coordinate their fields of fire with those of adjacent units. Within the platoon area all vehicles are dispersed under suitable cover and concealment. An adequate warning system is established. Camouflage discipline and the enforcement of blackout instructions are essential.

b. Some blackout safety precautions are:

(1) Individual vehicles moving within the bivouac in blackouts are preceded by a dismounted guide.

(2) Sleeping personnel are checked to see that none is near an engine exhaust.

(3) When the entire platoon moves from bivouac in blackout, men are carefully checked prior to departure to see that none is sleeping or left behind.

14. DUTIES IN BIVOUAC. a. After the bivouac has been occupied and organized for defense and security, first attention should be given to the combat readiness of the vehicles and fighting equipment and to the comfort and security of the men. Men take care of their vehicles and fighting equipment before they take care of themselves. Officers and noncommissioned officers see that vehicles, equipment, and men are taken care of before they make themselves comfortable. Commanders must insure that men take precautions against bad weather; for example, by pitching shelter tents and ditching them if rain is likely. These matters and others to be attended to are listed below. Study them, learn them, apply them. Modify or amplify them as experience warrants. They will go a long way toward insuring that the bivouac is a good one and that men are ready for combat.

b. Security. (1) Are the vehicles dispersed? Camouflaged?

Figure 8. Security affords safe rest.

(2) Are the weapons mutually supporting? Are they manned?

(3) Are range cards and night firing aids prepared?

(4) Are there reliefs for men on outguard?

(5) Have blackout instructions been issued?

(6) Have prone shelters or fox holes been dug?

(7) Are antitank warning system signals understood?

(8) Do the men know the challenge, password, and reply?

c. **Combat readiness.** (1) Is the situation known by all?

(2) Is first echelon maintenance being performed?

(3) Have all vehicles been refueled?

(4) Have the weapons been cleaned and checked for operation?

(5) Do all vehicles and personnel have prescribed ammunition loads?

(6) Have all radios been checked?

(7) Are reserve rations on hand?

(8) Is the platoon ready to move on a moment's notice?

(9) Have orders been given for future plans?

d. **Contacts.** (1) Has contact been established with adjacent units?

(2) Has a runner been sent to the company CP?

(3) Has the company commander been informed of the disposition of the platoon?

(4) Do the members of the platoon know the location of the platoon CP? The company CP? The battalion CP? The battalion aid station?

(5) Do the members of the platoon know the location and general disposition of the other platoons of the company?

(6) Do the key personnel of the platoon know the location of the men who are sleeping?

e. **Living in and leaving the bivouac.** (1) Do the vehicles have hard standing?

(2) Have routes of egress been reconnoitered and suitably marked for night movement?

(3) Have latrine facilities been provided?

(4) Have the men the best available shelter?

(5) Is water available?

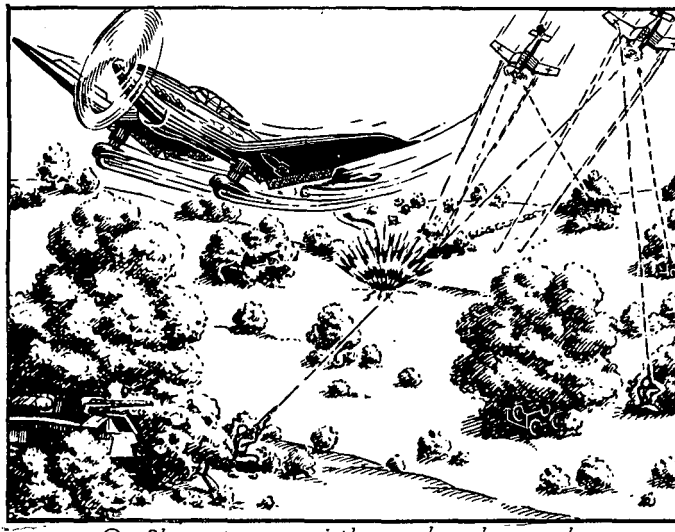
15. **AIR ATTACKS.** **a.** In the bivouac area all personnel of the reconnaissance platoon dig prone shelters or fox holes as directed. When planes are sighted all movement within the area must cease before the planes are close to the area; movement attracts attention, but a man lying motionless is difficult to locate. (See par. 9.)

b. Units are particularly vulnerable to air attacks when moving into or out of bivouac. The platoon commander coordinates the movement of his unit with other troops in the area in order to avoid traffic bottlenecks. Also, his own vehicles must be dispersed as they move out—not bunched up with the idea of taking distance on the march.

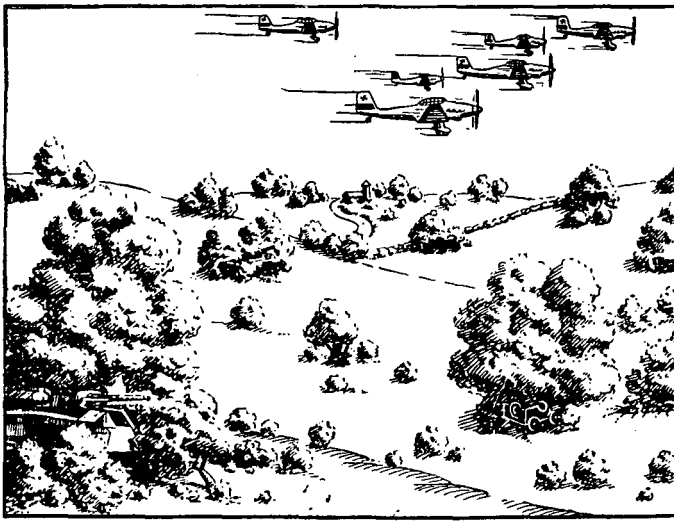
16. **DEFENSE AGAINST BIVOUAC RAIDS.** **a. Platoon plan.** Each platoon should develop and practice a plan to execute in the event of a surprise raid, especially at night. Regardless of how far back a bivouac is, a sudden raid by infiltrating or airborne troops is always a possibility, and there may be no friendly troops between the tank destroyers and the enemy. In making defense plans the platoon area should be considered as a defense area and the weapons and individual arms of the platoon employed to organize it.

b. Action during raids. (1) Adequate defensive action during a night raid requires thorough training and rigid discipline. Each unit should adopt a standing operating procedure for defense at night. One method is to prescribe two alert signals, as follows:

(*a*) 1st signal is sounded when an enemy attack or infiltra-



① *Shoot at enemy airplanes when they attack.*



② *Concealment is effective in passive defense.*

Figure 9. Air attacks.

tion appears imminent. All personnel occupy prepared positions with 50 percent on alert and others resting.

(*b*) 2d signal is sounded when an enemy attack or infiltration is made. All personnel are alerted and remain in prepared positions. All movement within the area is assumed to be hostile and subject to immediate attack.

(2) The primary weapons for defense against close-in night attacks are antitank and antipersonnel mines, flares, grenades, bayonets, and knives. The firing of weapons is rigidly controlled as their flash discloses the location of the firer. There is no withdrawal from a position during a night attack. All men must understand that they are "frozen" to their positions regardless of what happens.

SECTION IV

POSITIONS IN READINESS

---

17. GENERAL. A position in readiness is an area which an organization occupies while the battle situation is developing. There will probably be two or more combat areas in which the battalion may engage tanks. Choice of the battle ground will depend largely upon enemy movements. While awaiting these movements the battalion remains in position in readiness, prepared to move rapidly into combat.

18. OCCUPATION AND DUTIES. A position in readiness may be occupied for an hour or two, or possibly for 2 or 3 days. If the platoon is not otherwise employed, troops and vehicles are disposed as in a bivouac. Duties of personnel are identical with those of a bivouac position except that the platoon commander supervises last-minute preparations for battle and sees that all men of the platoon know and understand the situation and their part in it.

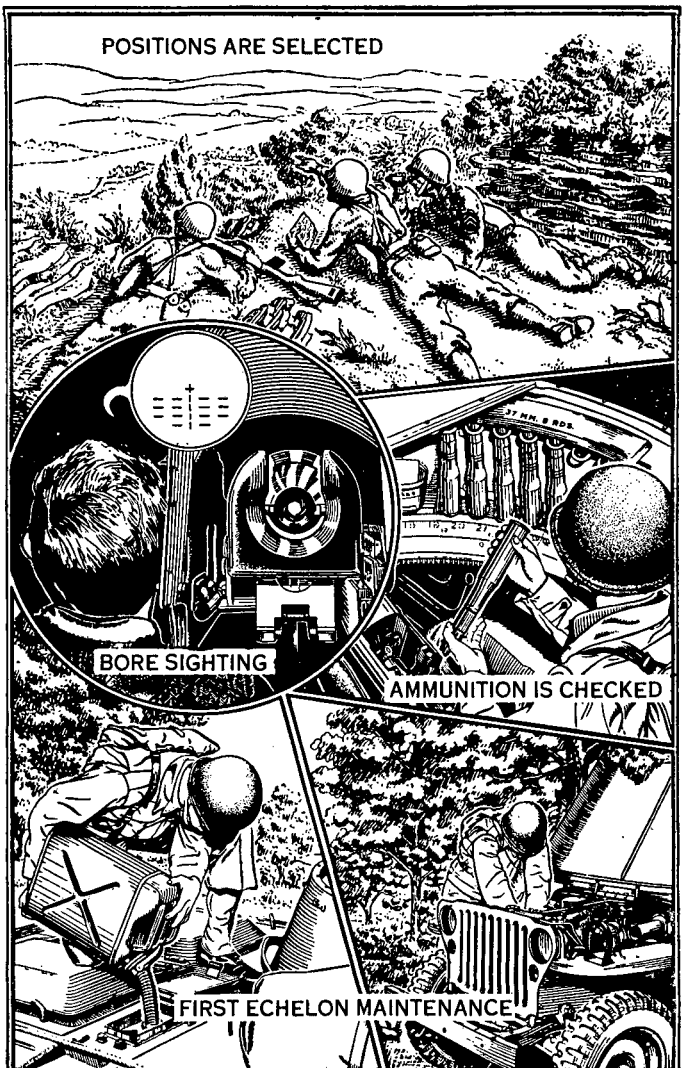


Figure 10. Final preparation for battle.

SECTION V

OBSERVATION POSTS

19. LOCATIONS OF OBSERVATION POSTS (FM–21 75). a. In choosing locations for observation posts, select the dominant ground overlooking favorable tank approaches or the terrain generally most favorable to the enemy. If adequate observation can be secured elsewhere, avoid the obvious locations, which will be automatically shelled or smoked by the enemy. If concealment can be had, the military crest of a hill is frequently a good site. Side slopes often provide satisfactory positions which are easy to conceal and to approach from the rear.

b. Alternate observation posts should be selected in case the primary observation post is smoked or heavily fired upon. An alternate observation post may also be used when certain terrain is dead space to the primary observation post.

c. Before and during an engagement successive sites for new observation posts must be selected.

d. If two or more observation posts are operated in the same area, covered routes between them are highly desirable.

20. OBSERVATION POSTS OVERLOOKING ROUTE OF MARCH. March security is increased by the use of successive observation posts located to one or both flanks and ahead of the marching unit. When contact is imminent, observation posts are established during marches wherever the ter-

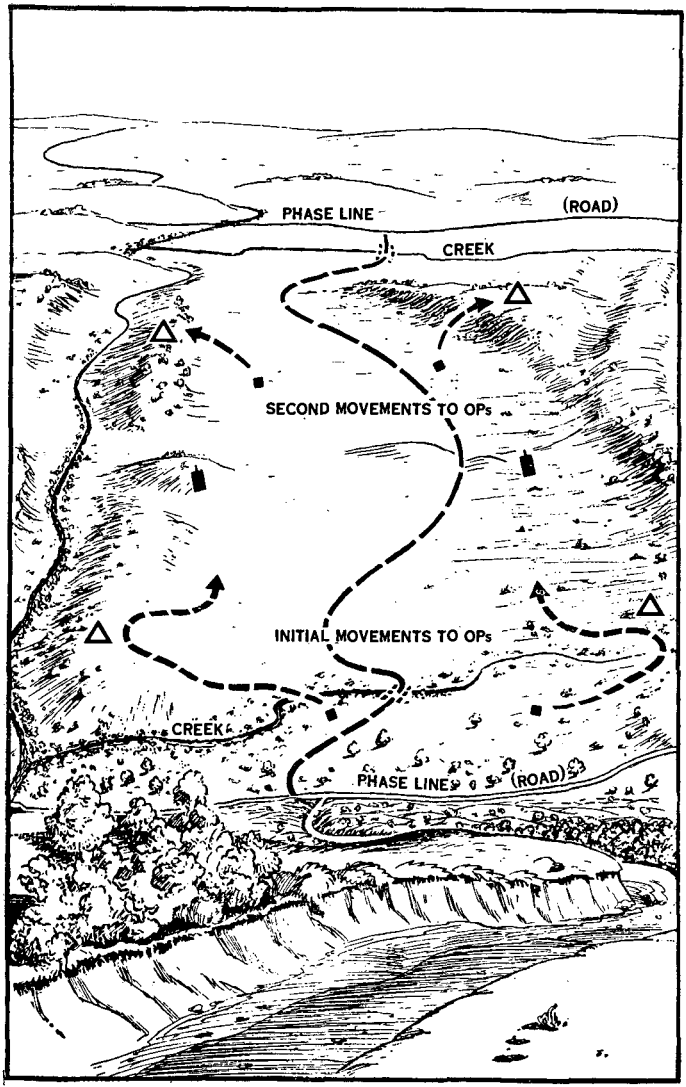


Figure 11. Occupation of successive observation posts.

rain and time permit. These observation posts are manned usually by the crew of a ¼-ton truck.

21. APPROACH TO AN OBSERVATION POST (FM 21–75). a. The method of approaching observation posts is dependent upon—

(1) The imminence of contact.

(2) The distance to the point selected.

b. If contact is imminent, personnel should approach the location with caution, and—

(1) Move by bounds.

(2) Use concealed and covered approaches.

(3) Conceal vehicle in vicinity and move dismounted.

(4) Approach from several directions.

(5) Fight only in self defense.

(6) Provide for intermediate objectives and assembly point.

c. When the distance to the point selected is great (usually when contact is not imminent), personnel may remain mounted in approaching to a covered position near an observation post. However, the final approach to the OP should always be dismounted, following the procedure outlined above.

22. OBSERVATION POST SECURITY. a. Camouflage immediately upon occupation.

b. Conceal antenna.

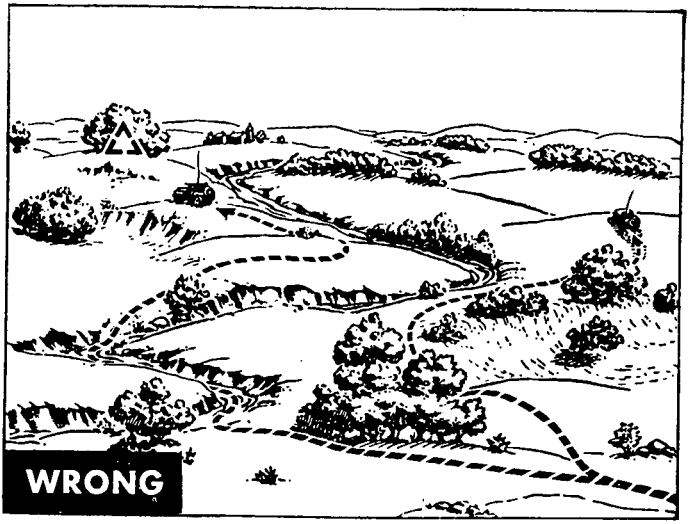
c. Permit the approach of authorized personnel only.

d. Allow no vehicles to be brought close to the observation post.

e. Prevent the making of trails or paths.

f. Remain motionless and concealed during approach of planes.

g. Prohibit loud talking, unnecessary noise, fire, smoking, and lights at night. Use headset on radio instead of loud speaker.



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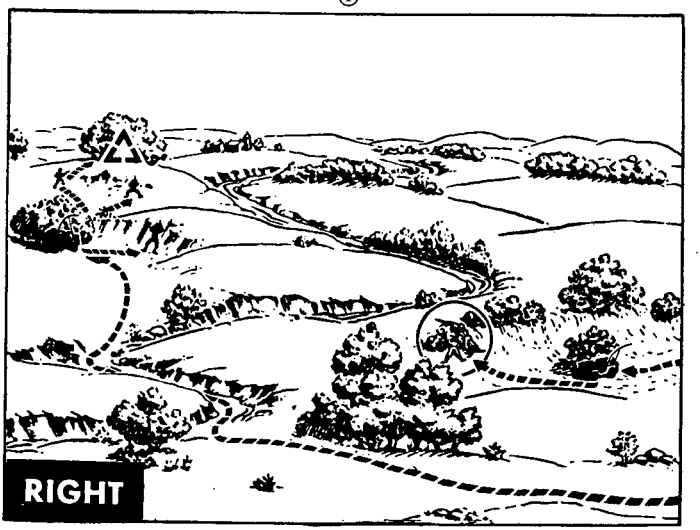

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Figure 12. How to approach an observation post.

h. Occupy under cover of darkness if situation permits. Avoid daylight movement.

i. Dig shelters for all personnel.

23. COMPOSITION OF OBSERVATION POST PARTIES. a. As few men as possible comprise the observation post party. Keeping in small groups and the use of small, mobile vehicles lessen the chance of being seen by the enemy. A well-balanced observation post party, which is expected to function for a period of time, might consist of an officer and as many as five men, including a sergeant. Of this party only an observer and assistant observer (recorder) should be at the observing position at one time. The remainder of the observation post party, being constantly careful to avoid enemy observation, will be available to operate a remote control or radio relay station, to lay or to repair wire to the observing position, to act as messengers and to relieve the observer and his assistant.

b. Whenever possible, observers and their assistants should be relieved every 2 hours. However, this may be prohibited by personnel limitations or by enemy observation of the route of approach to the position. Equipment should include radios, binoculars, maps, message books, and compasses. In addition, a telescope, protractor, and remote control unit may be most useful.

24. OPERATION OF OBSERVATION POSTS. Before proceeding to the observation post, everyone in the party should be thoroughly acquainted with the situation. The leader should have a definite plan and make certain that each member of the party is familiar with it. The plan should include definite tasks for each man; a route to and from the selected terrain feature; and the procedure to be followed (including the location of a rally point) if the party is driven off the ground or becomes engaged in a fire fight.

Figure 13. Observation post.

SECTION VI

RECONNAISSANCE

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25. GENERAL. a. Reconnaissance is obtaining information of the enemy and terrain in the field. Except when necessary for the accomplishment of its mission or for self-protection, reconnaissance units act by stealth. (See par. 26.) When enemy opposition can be bypassed it is better to avoid combat and insure accomplishment of the mission. Reconnaissance patrols should be specifically advised of the conduct expected of them.

b. Reconnaissance patrols consists of moving groups or detachments sent out from a larger body on an independent or limited mission of reconnaissance. A patrol may be part of a reconnaissance section or it may be an entire platoon or larger unit. The size of a patrol is based upon a consideration of the following factors:

(1) Mission.
(2) Terrain and visibility.
(3) Distance to friendly troops.
(4) Time the patrol is to be out.
(5) Number of messengers that will be required to be sent back.
(6) Whether prisoners are to be captured and sent back.
(7) Amount of equipment to be carried.
(8) Known habits of the enemy.

c. Members of reconnaissance patrols do not evaluate or

interpret information. All information, together with its source, is sent back.

26. OBTAINING INFORMATION (FM 21–75). **a.** Information of the enemy or the terrain is obtained by contact with the enemy or presence on the terrain, by observation, and by questioning friendly troops. It is a mistake to fight for information when the information can be obtained by other means; but the platoon must fight if fighting is necessary for the accomplishment of its mission.

b. The platoon is the basic reconnaissance unit. It is organized to operate within a designated zone or area, or along a prescribed route or axis. Two reconnaissance sections, each composed of an armored car and ¼-ton trucks, operate under platoon control. Conditions may necessitate the formation of teams consisting of one type of vehicle only, or the platoon may operate dismounted.

c. Reconnaissance sections or teams move across country wherever practicable when enemy forces are believed to be near. Roads are covered by observation unless their detailed reconnaissance is included in the mission. Echelons of a section or team move by bounds, utilizing available cover and concealment. The leading echelon moves to successive observation points along a route or axis of advance; ¼-ton trucks are utilized to reconnoiter between bounds or to the flanks.

d. Reconnaissance sections or teams attempt to secure observation points from which enemy forces can be observed. Contact is maintained with enemy forces pending instructions from the platoon commander. Enemy patrols are reported and avoided if practicable. (See fig. 14.)

e. Terrain and the situation may require the use of dismounted patrols or reconnaissance by fire to supplement observation. Guns on armored cars and automatic weapons support the movement of ¼-ton trucks and dismounted men. Moving vehicles take cover when fired upon; those not in motion

support by fire. Dismounted personnel reconnoiter to determine the enemy's strength and dispositions and to discover routes by which the enemy position can be bypassed. A report is made to the platoon leader who directs subsequent action.

f. When an element of the platoon reports contact with the enemy, the platoon leader estimates the capabilities of the enemy force. He confirms reports of large enemy forces by personal reconnaissance. Enemy strength may necessitate a change in plan to accomplish the platoon's mission. The platoon leader reports the situation to the company commander and states his plan of action.

g. When it becomes necessary to engage in combat with an enemy force which threatens the success of the mission, the platoon makes full use of its firepower and maneuverability. However, if enemy strength beyond the capabilities of the platoon is indicated, reinforcement by additional reconnaissance or destroyer elements should be requested.

h. Platoon commanders exercise control by voice radio, supplemented by visual signals and messengers when practicable. When control is difficult, movement is regulated by prescribing objectives or phase lines.

i. Reconnaissance sections or teams must not overlook any source of information. Much accurate and dependable information can be obtained from friendly patrols and command posts.

27. RECONNAISSANCE DUTIES (FM 21–75). a. Platoon leader. (1) Issues order.

(2) Checks equipment and time of departure of platoon.

(3) Determines whether elements arrive on successive phase lines on time and if information is received in accordance with schedule. Checks radio security.

(4) Relays pertinent information, including recommendations, to company commander.

b. Platoon sergeant. (1) Assists platoon leader in check-

Figure 14. Sideslipping.

ing equipment prior to departure and in determining that every man is acquainted with details necessary to accomplish mission.

(2) Takes charge of one section if the platoon operates separately as sections.

(3) Directs movement of section so that elements arrive on successive phase lines on time.

(4) Checks whether information is complete and is relayed to platoon leader.

c. Section sergeant. (1) Checks equipment and vehicles prior to departure.

(2) Determines that each man knows the situation regarding enemy, friendly forces, missions, route, method of operating, and time and place of reporting information.

(3) Designates one man as observer and scout.

(4) Designates one man to assist in maintenance of direction by means of compass.

(5) Designates one man to keep sketch and to record odometer readings.

(6) Is responsible for halting on phase lines and relaying positive and negative information obtained.

28. ROUTE RECONNAISSANCE. a. The platoon is often called upon to determine the advisability of using certain routes that are indicated by map study as being available for the movement of a larger body. (See figs. 15 and 16.)

b. General information desired for routes is:

(1) Roads—type, condition, traffic capabilities, width, defiles, and critical traffic points.

(2) Bridges—capacity, length, width, location, type, condition (including abutments and approaches), and location of suitable bypasses, if any.

(3) Fords—location, depth and width of water, type of bottom, condition of banks, and suitability of approaches.

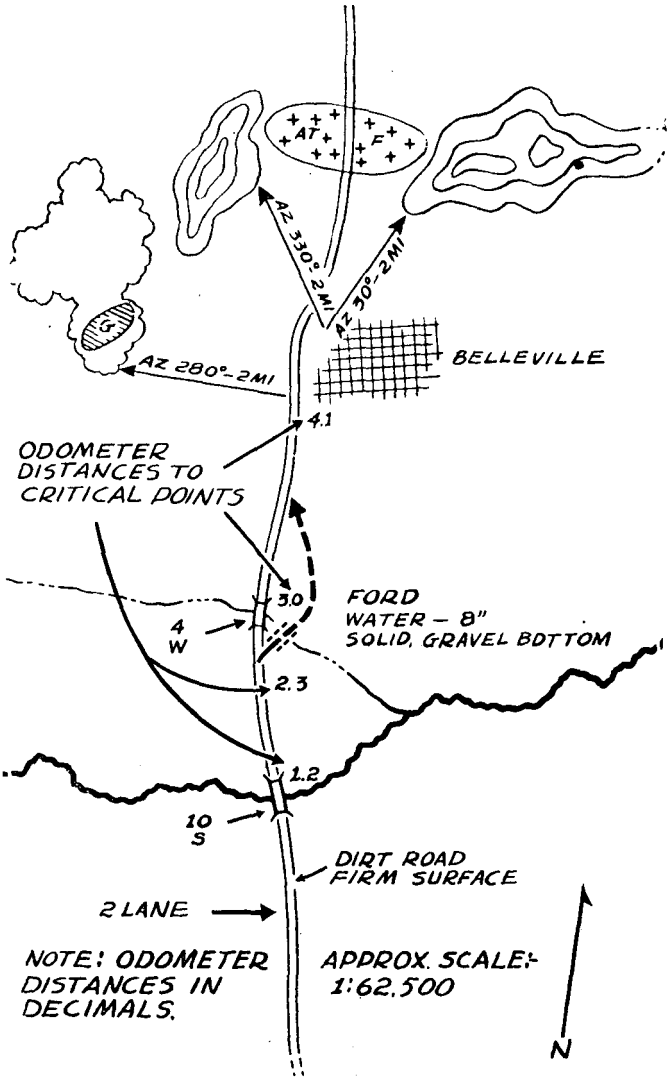

Figure 15. Route sketch.

(4) Obstacles, natural and artificial—location, type, and defenses, if any.

(5) Location of friendly troops.

c. Route sketches facilitate the return of information obtained from route reconnaissance. Critical road features are indicated by symbol and odometer distance, and are described by factual notes. Terrain features are indicated by azimuth and distance. Key localities are sketched in their approximate location.

d. The platoon leader usually sends a section on each route. To coordinate the activities of each section, phase lines or objectives will be specified. If contact is imminent and considerable information is required, including the reconnaissance of all side roads, the entire platoon may be needed for one route.

e. When contact is not imminent a reconnaissance section can reconnoiter a single route at 10 miles per hour. When contact is imminent this rate is necessarily slower.

29. AREA RECONNAISSANCE. a. Reconnaissance of an area is performed to search for information in a definite locality. This locality may be to the front, flanks, or rear. It may be examined with the intention of using the area as a bivouac, a position in readiness, or a combat area.

b. The time required to perform an area reconnaissance varies with the detail of the information desired and the tactical situation.

30. ZONE RECONNAISSANCE (fig. 17). a. To avoid duplication of effort, reconnaissance agencies may be assigned zones in which to operate. Zone reconnaissance may be performed in front of an advancing force. When the location of the enemy is in doubt, a zone of reconnaissance may be assigned. Unless adequate time is allowed the reconnaissance units, information cannot be gathered in great detail.

b. Factors to be considered in determining the width of the

zone are: the terrain, extent and condition of road net, means of communication, time available, weather condition and visibility, fatigue of personnel, condition of vehicles, expected enemy action, and nature of information sought. A tank destroyer reconnaissance platoon normally reconnoiters a maximum zone of 2 miles width at a rate of from 8 miles per hour to that of a dismounted patrol.

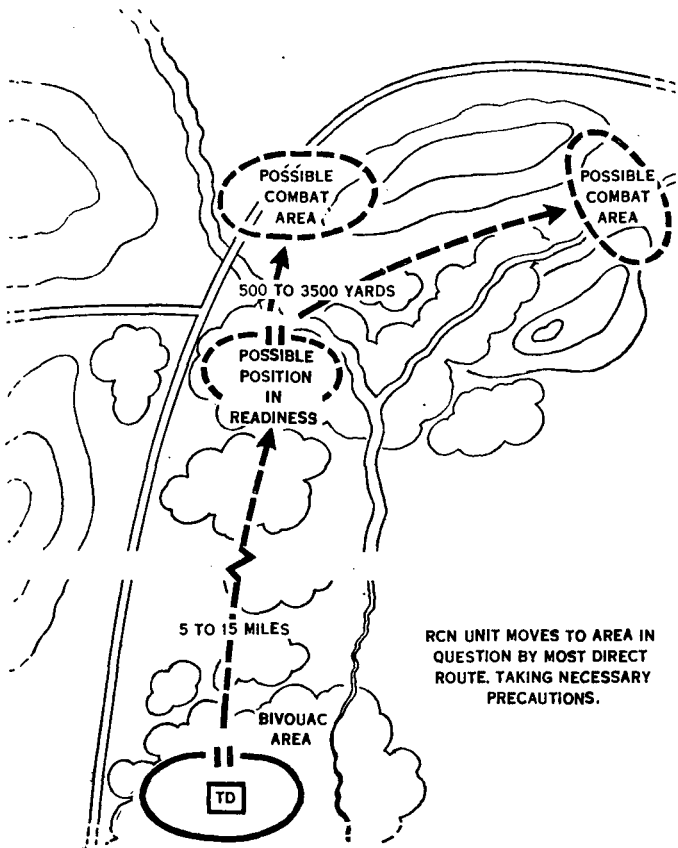

Figure 16. Platoon area.

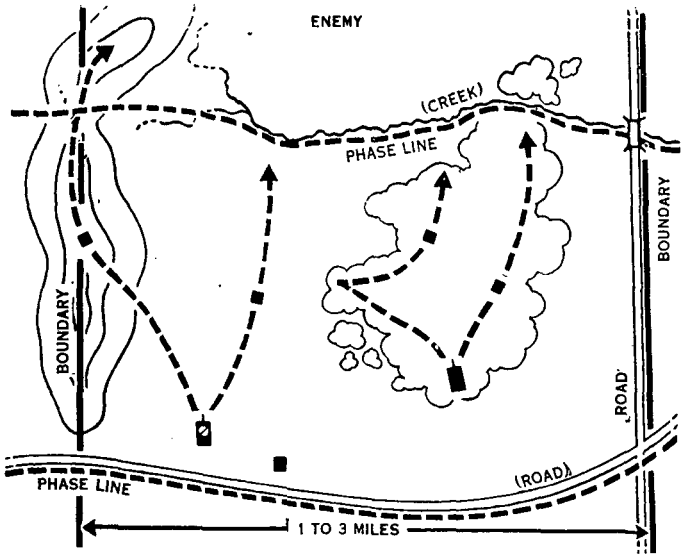

Figure 17. Platoon zone.

31. EXECUTION OF AREA AND ZONE RECONNAISSANCE. a. The platoon leader issues a complete order. The platoon area or zone is normally divided between the two sections. Phase lines are used to coordinate and control section operations. In featureless terrain, sections may move generally on objectives designated by an azimuth and a distance. Open formations are usual. Movement may be by bounds. Platoon command posts are designated for the return of information by messenger in the event of radio difficulties or silence. It is generally preferable to keep armored cars on the platoon axis of advance while the men in ¼-ton trucks reconnoiter to the flanks or man observation posts for short periods. In the event of difficulties in either section's zone, the armored cars may be sent to its assistance.

b. The duties of personnel as outlined under route reconnaissance apply also to area or zone reconnaissance missions.

c. When contact is imminent the sections employ infiltration rather than combat to gain information. *They seek unopposed routes of advance to observation points.* Progress is made by bounds from one observation point to another, utilizing available cover and concealment. Roads are covered by observation. (See par. 26.)

d. Hand and flag signals can be used to advantage. The following formations may be used with prearranged signals for their execution (FM 18-15):

(1) Sideslip left or right.

(2) Diamond formation.

(3) V-formation.

(4) Echelon left or right.

(5) Formation A—disperse vehicles under cover and assemble dismounted.

(6) Formation B—establish base of fire or pivot of maneuver with one section while the other section operates as a maneuvering force.

e. Just as in route reconnaissance, the return of information is facilitated by sketches showing route by azimuth readings to prominent terrain features, odometer figures, and other appropriate items.

32. BATTLE RECONNAISSANCE. a. Battle reconnaissance begins when the opposing forces approach contact and continues until all contact is broken. It includes continuous observation of the terrain and of enemy forces engaged in the action and of those whose contact with our principal forces is imminent.

b. Battle reconnaissance serves to prevent surprise; it keeps the commander abreast of the enemy situation and terrain in his zone of operation. It also provides the information upon which to base present and future plans of operation.

33. EXECUTION OF BATTLE RECONNAISSANCE (fig. 18). a. The platoon accomplishes a battle reconnaissance

mission by working around the enemy's flank or through gaps between elements of his force in order to determine the strength, composition, dispositions, and actions of the forces engaged and the approach of reinforcements.

b. During battle reconnaissance, contact must be maintained with adjacent friendly units. In the execution of battle reconnaissance, the reconnaissance unit locates the enemy's forward elements. The unit then extends laterally to discover the enemy's flanks. Sections or patrols make contact with enemy front or flanks by infiltration through the hostile counterreconnaissance screen or by occupying high ground prior to the hostile approach. Visual contact must be maintained with elements the size of a platoon or larger. The next higher commander is kept informed of the movements of these hostile elements.

c. As the two main forces approach (or as the hostile armor approaches the tank destroyer gun units in combat positions) an increased effort is made to locate the hostile main effort. All reconnaissance elements do not move to the flanks; some must remain in front of the hostile force to keep the gun elements informed of enemy dispositions and actions. Hostile armor must never be allowed to outflank the gun elements. The reconnaissance elements may point out by reference point or coordinates enemy targets which are wholly or partially visible to the guns or which are moving so as to become remunerative targets for the guns. This information materially assists the gun elements in fire control and distribution and gives them more time when a move to supplementary positions is necessary.

d. During the fire fight, reconnaissance of the hostile flanks is continued. The reconnaissance elements which remained in front of the hostile force may retire through gaps between the tank destroyer gun units to serve as connecting links between those units. However, they do not necessarily withdraw between the gun units, but may remain in position, allow the

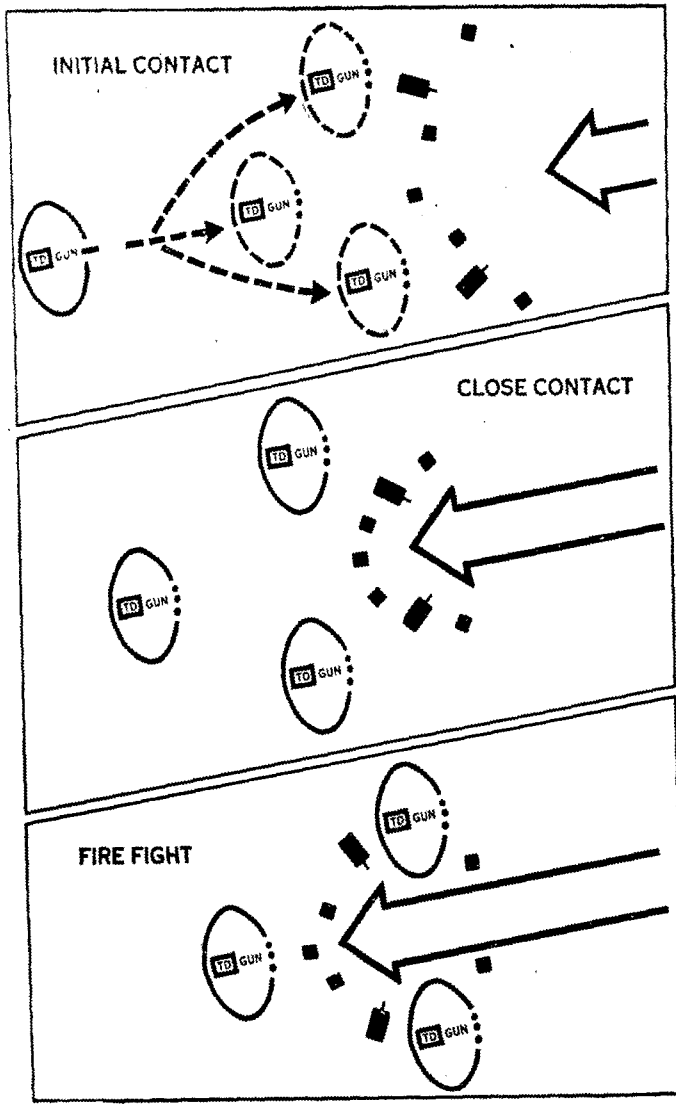

Figure 18. Battle reconnaissance.

hostile forces to bypass, and continue to report on those forces; visual contact must be maintained. When the enemy retires the reconnaissance elements move forward to new observation posts to maintain contact and locate other hostile forces.

e. The conduct of small reconnaissance units during battle reconnaissance is as follows: Moving vehicles take cover when fired upon; those not in motion give support by fire; and dismounted personnel reconnoiter to determine the enemy disposition. When the enemy force is small it is overwhelmed or sideslipped, depending on which course of action is quicker. When the enemy force is large the reconnaissance element conducts a delaying action to secure freedom of movement; the reconnaissance element then bypasses the hostile force and continues on its mission. In either of the above cases the contact is reported.

f. After combat by the battalion, the reconnaissance platoon may be ordered to—

(1) Maintain contact with the enemy. In the absence of other orders, contact is always maintained.

(2) Secure the area while the position is being consolidated.

(3) Execute a prescribed reconnaissance mission.

34. REORGANIZATION. a. At the completion of a phase of a reconnaissance or following an engagement, the platoon leader reorganizes his unit, preferably in place. However, primary and alternate platoon or section rallying areas are designated in advance (all members of the platoon must know the locations) so that the platoon can be quickly reassembled in event circumstances cause it to be scattered. Locations of rallying areas depend upon the situation; they may be to the front, flank, or rear. When the primary area is to the front, an alternate area to the rear is selected. Use of the platoon command post as the primary rally position will facilitate the return of all elements.

b. After determining that observers are posted to provide security through an adequate warning system, the platoon commander takes an inventory of his platoon. Section leaders report their situations to him as regards—

(1) Casualties.

(2) Ammunition supply.

(3) Fuel supply.

(4) Damage to vehicles and weapons.

c. The platoon commander sends a consolidated report to the company commander. He then provides for—

(1) First aid and the evacuation of the wounded.

(2) Readjustment due to casualties.

(3) Redistribution of ammunition.

(4) Disposition of damaged vehicles.

d. The *wounded* are given immediate first aid. The slightly wounded remain with their vehicles. The seriously wounded are left in place and their location is reported during forward movements; in the event of a retrograde movement, they are carried in a vehicle, if possible, until they can be turned over to an ambulance, aid station, or to a vehicle of another unit that is moving farther to the rear.

e. *Readjustment due to casualties* is made by reassigning personnel if necessary.

f. Remaining *ammunition* is equalized between vehicles.

g. During forward movements, *damaged* vehicles that cannot operate are left in place; their locations are reported. During retrograde movements, they are towed to the rear if possible; they are destroyed only as a last resort.

h. Reorganization must be practiced. In unit training and upon maneuvers, casualties of key personnel and loss of matériel should be simulated. Reorganization under disorganized and difficult conditions should be practiced so that the execution of any assigned mission will not be unduly delayed by battle losses.

i. More complete reorganization is effected at the completion of each mission. At this time the platoon should be assembled to exchange experiences and information of enemy tactics and instructions given for the correction of any mistakes that have occurred.

35. RECONNAISSANCE BY FIRE (fig. 19). a. Fire on a suspected enemy position may cause the enemy to disclose his presence by movement or by returning the fire. This is termed reconnaissance by fire.

b. Reconnaissance by fire is a special technique used only when it is definitely known that the enemy is in the immediate vicinity. Reconnaissance by fire is made at the loss of achieving further tactical surprise; generally it is only used when entering battle or when contact has been made and lost. Reconnaissance by fire is not made when friendly troops are in the direction of fire.

c. If the enemy returns the fire, the reconnaissance element withdraws to the flank or rear and bypasses the hostile force. If the fire is not returned the reconnaissance element continues on its missions; however, caution should be used since reconnaissance by fire does not always draw the fire of seasoned troops.

d. When the enemy is known to be well trained, another method may be used. One reconnaissance element remains stationary and covers the suspected locality; the other element advances slowly, then suddenly turns and dashes away, firing back at the suspected locality. This maneuver creates the impression that the enemy has been discovered and usually draws fire.

e. During the advance of a platoon on reconnaissance many suspicious localities are encountered. For the most part these are wooded areas, defiles, and isolated structures. When secrecy is not essential, reconnaissance by fire tends to elimi-

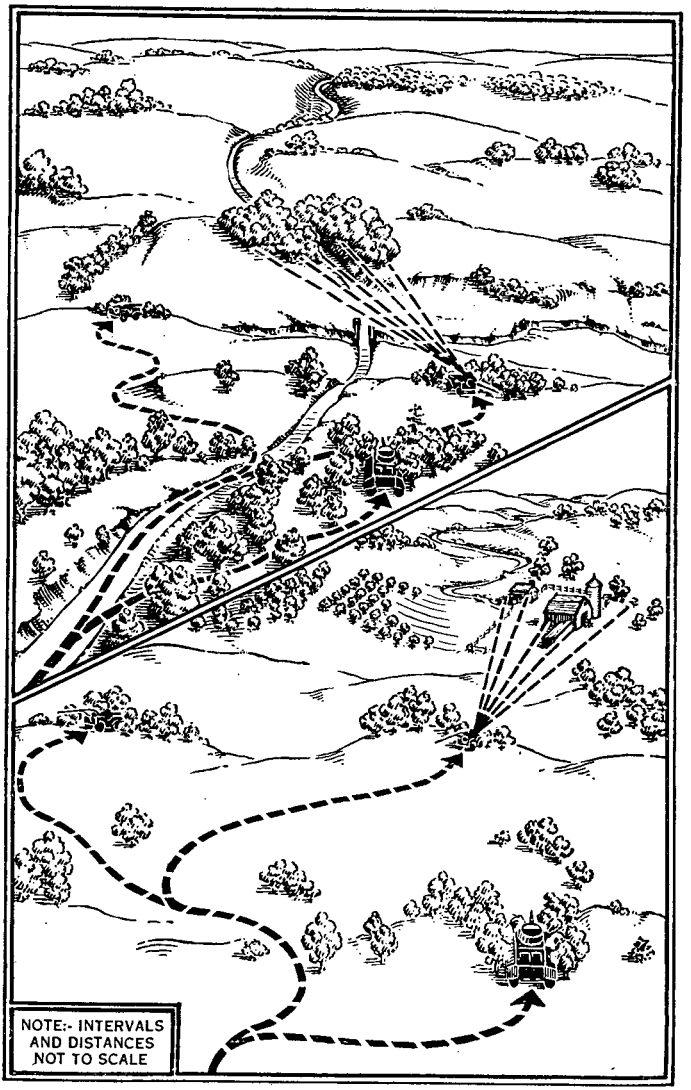

Figure 19. Reconnaissance by fire. (Fire on possible enemy positions when speed, not secrecy, is essential)

nate the danger of moving into a well-concealed enemy position without being aware of its presence.

36. BASE OF FIRE. In executing reconnaissance or security missions in which reconnaissance units are required to fight, these units may use the base of fire principle to attack, to disengage, or to bypass the enemy. When the platoon is operating as a unit, one section becomes the base of fire, while the other section becomes the maneuvering force, mounted or dismounted. (See figs. 20 and 21.)

37. RECONNAISSANCE AT NIGHT (FM 21–75). **a.** Reconnaissance is slow and less effective at night. Motors are audible for considerable distances and must be used carefully, if at all; starting motors can easily give away a patrol. Night reconnaissance is limited ordinarily to dismounted patrolling, observation of routes, and the use of listening posts. Equipment must be muffled; radio dial lights must be masked.

b. Reconnaissance at night is planned after detailed map study. Reconnaissance of routes is made in daylight where practicable. The platoon commander prepares sketches showing the route to be followed, landmarks which are easily recognized at night, compass bearings for major changes in direction, and distances from the initial point to prominent landmarks along the route.

c. Plans for control are definite and simple. Rally points should be at areas readily located in darkness. Shielded colored flashlights and audible signals may be provided for identification or transmission of prearranged messages.

d. Moves are made to successive objectives by bounds. Dismounted men precede vehicles by bounds when contact is imminent. The length of each bound is limited by the range of the method of signaling used and the effective range of

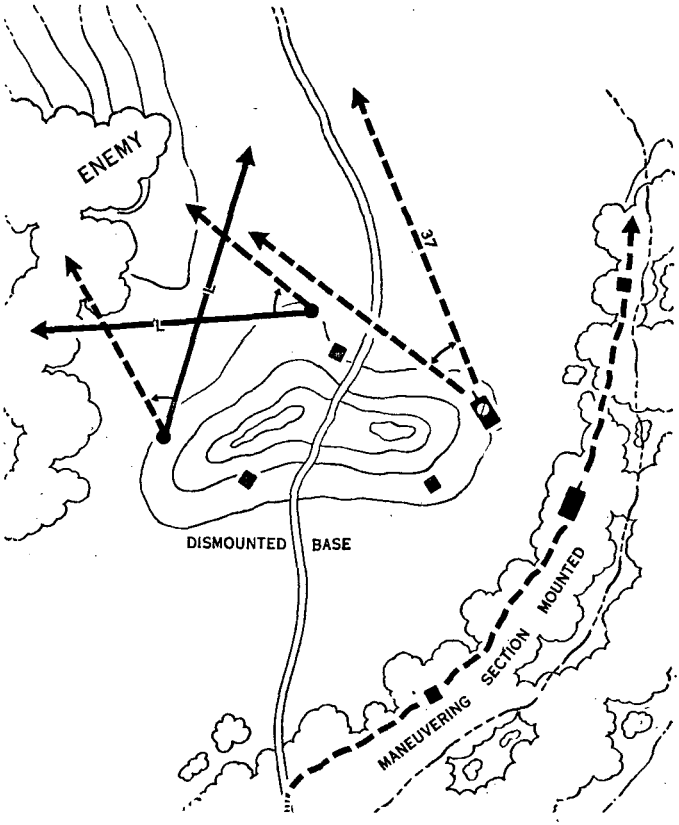

Figure 20. Base of fire, maneuvering section mounted.

the supporting weapon. Halts are made in positions where the approach of hostile men or vehicles will be outlined against the sky.

38. EMPLOYMENT WHEN THE BATTALION HAS INDIRECT FIRE MISSIONS. a. When the battalion is assigned indirect fire missions the reconnaissance platoons may

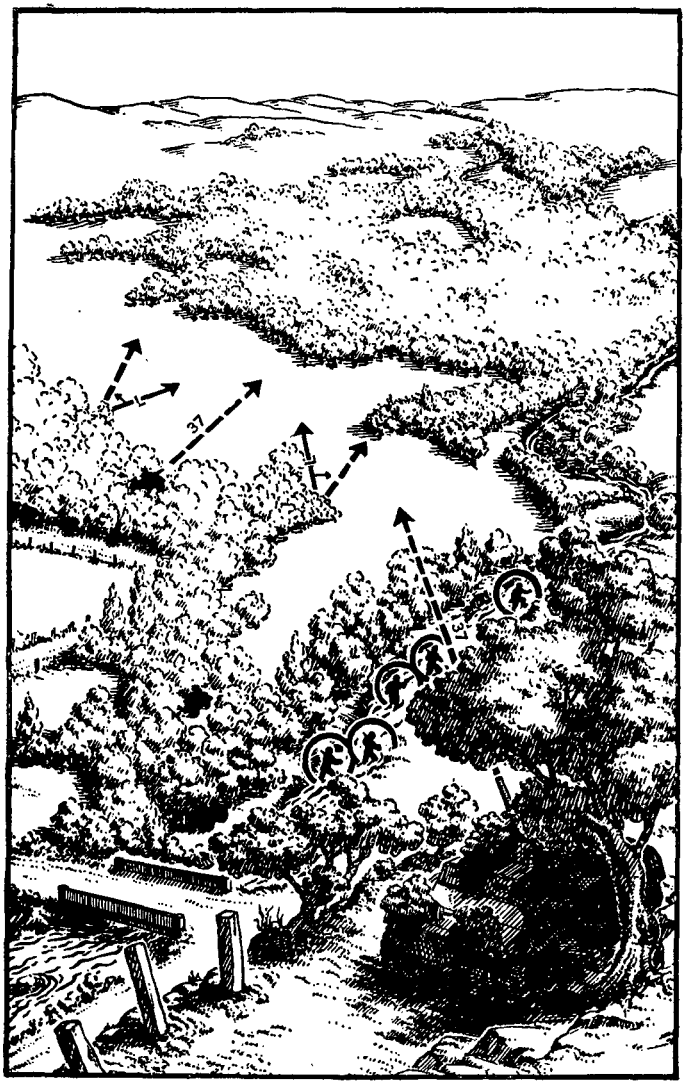

Figure 21. Base of fire, maneuvering section dismounted.

be used to furnish forward observers. Ordinarily the forward observer team is composed of: the platoon leader; a ¼-ton truck; a car, armored, light; and the crews of these vehicles. The platoon leader with the ¼-ton truck is the forward observer and the car, armored, light, serves as a relay station. When the observer is to be well forward another ¼-ton truck may accompany the platoon leader to provide additional security. (See par. 24.)

b. When the battalion has indirect fire missions the reconnaissance platoon may serve as a part of an antitank warning system. Observation posts or listening posts are selected overlooking the routes of tank approach. A prearranged warning system must be provided and the platoon should be netted with the warning net of the higher units.

c. When assigning the above missions the fact should not be overlooked that the tank destroyer battalion may be required, upon short notice, to execute its primary mission. Therefore, before secondary missions are assigned, sufficient reconnaissance must have been made to permit the battalion to execute without delay any tank destroyer mission.

SECTION VII

ORDERS, CONTROL, REPORTING

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39. **ORDERS** (FM 21–75). a. Before issuing his order, the platoon leader should make an estimate of the situation, including *a detailed map study of the terrain involved.* He must give careful consideration to the following:

(1) Time available.

(2) Nature and amount of information to be obtained.

(3) Road net, including crossroads.

(4) Possibility of enemy contact.

(5) Whether radios or messengers are to be used.

(6) Means available (one section or the entire platoon).

The platoon leader should then plan his reconnaissance step by step so that when he issues his order he can specify actions for the entire platoon—along the route; at each phase line; in the event of contact; upon completion of mission.

b. In issuing his order, the platoon leader must be specific and must include, if appropriate—

(1) All pertinent available information of the enemy if not already known by the members of his platoon.

(2) Information of friendly forces with which the reconnaissance platoon may come in contact.

(3) The specific information to be secured (including when and where it is to be obtained).

(4) Zone boundaries (area axis, or route).

(5) Objectives or phase lines; times to be reached.

(6) Axis of march.

(7) The times when and places to which reports will be sent.

(8) The time and place at which the reconnaissance platoon will rejoin its parent unit, or what it will do when it has accomplished its mission.

(9) Administrative details.

(10) Communication (including advanced message centers, CP's of main body, etc.).

c. The following form, using the key word IDEALS, expedites the issuance of orders:

		A sample order
(1) I	Information regarding the enemy and approximate line of contact. Information of friendly troops.	Follow me on your maps—Reinforced enemy division holds this high ground. Our air has located 50 tanks here. 20th Div (to which we are attached) atks 1200, enveloping enemy W flank from this vicinity.
(2) D	Decision. Mission of next higher unit. Mission of platoon. (If more than one, state in order of priority or when each will commence.) *What, When, Where, How, Why.*	Our plat is attached to "A" Co. "A" Co is to assist in protecting Div W flank by marching along this route. This plat performs zone rcn ahead of "A" Co. The plat will move out at 0600 to— (1) Locate route for "A" Co; (2) Locate suitable combat areas in case of hostile armored counterattack. Particular attention to be paid to areas in these three localities.

(3) E	Employment. Phase lines, time of arrival thereon, and any instructions concerning actions thereat.	The plat will reconnoiter in the zone bounded by this road on W and a line from this range of hills to this town on E, both inclusive. First section takes W half of zone inclusive this trail; second section E half of zone.
	Route, area, or zone. (If area or zone, assign boundaries and distance to each section. If there are no recognizable boundaries, width, azimuth, and distance are assigned.) Time and place of reporting positive and negative information. (Schedule) Contact to be reported immediately. Liaison between sections and to the flanks.	*First* phase line along this road to be reached by 0700. *Second* phase line along this stream and trail to be reached by 0800. Report and pass on immediately. *Third* phase line along this river to be reached by 0900. Report and await instructions. Establish lateral contact between sections on each phase line. Sections prepare sketch of routes in zone; sketch to include possible combat areas. Sketches to be delivered to my CP at this point on third phase line by 0930.
(4) A	Administrative matters, such as; rations, water, fuel, ammunition, and evacuation.	Take 2 days' "C" rations; check fuel and ammunition. We will resupply from "A" Co. Aid station at bn CP. Bring casualties to my route of advance and leave them.

(5)	L	Locations of command posts and commander. Axis of platoon leaders advance and location at specified times.	My axis of advance will be along this trail after 0645. Advance CP's—first, at this point, until 0830; thereafter, at this point until further notice. Plat sgt. moves along this road on W edge of Plat zone.
(6)	S	Signal instructions, including radio silence, methods of reporting, and code.	Use 20th Div. SOI. Radio silence except: to report by brevity code arrival on phase lines; when there is contact with hostile forces. It is now 0500. Any questions?

40. PHASE LINES. a. Easily identified terrain or man-made features are usually selected for use as phase lines.

b. Phase lines are used to control and coordinate the action and movements of elements of the platoon and to regulate the time and place for reporting information of the enemy and terrain.

c. Upon arrival at a phase line, the reconnaissance platoon or elements thereof may—

(1) Continue on its mission without hesitating.

(2) Proceed at a given time in accordance with a prearranged schedule.

(3) Stop and await orders before advancing.

d. In any of the above cases, the platoon will report its time of arrival, time of clearing, or specific information desired in accordance with its instructions.

e. To insure proper execution of the above, the reconnaissance unit commander must include in his order specific instructions on the action to be taken at each phase line.

f. First contact with enemy forces will be reported immediately. Other important information will be reported when obtained. The absence of enemy information may be an important factor in the planning or execution of an operation. Therefore, negative information and any unreported positive information obtained should be reported upon arrival at each phase line. Phase lines may be designated by code names.

41. **PLATOON COMMAND POSTS.** The distances and movements involved in reconnaissance often delay the transmission of information, particularly when sent by messengers. It is therefore advisable to designate successive command posts where messages may be delivered to either the platoon commander or platoon sergeant. A guide assists messengers to find the command post. The locations and times each command post is opened and closed are announced in advance. Minimum movement of the command post facilitates the receipt of messages. These command posts should be near prominent terrain features; they may be at observation posts or on phase lines. (See fig. 22.)

42. **REPORTING INFORMATION** (FM 101–5 and 21–75). a. What. (1) *Positive.* (*a*) Essential elements; information specifically called for; number, composition, equipment, and attitude of the enemy.

(*b*) Routine information habitually given, such as condition of roads and bridges, location of mine fields, location of friendly troops.

(2) *Negative.* Information that area or zone reconnoitered has contained nothing upon which to report. Lets the commander know for example that in a specific area there is no enemy patrolling, armor, artillery fire, or other activity.

b. Where was the enemy observed (doing what; direction of movement, if any, with exact location; any shift in dispositions)?

c. When was the enemy observed?

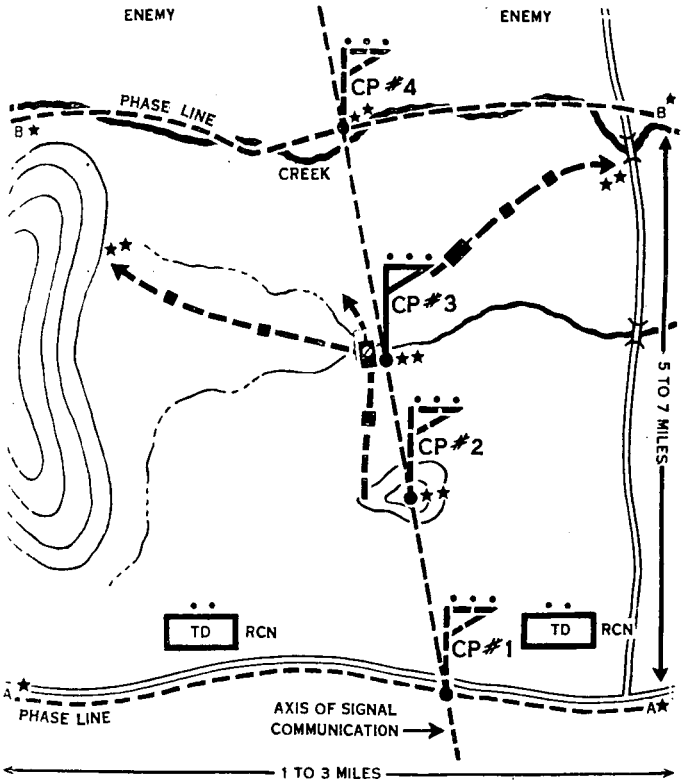

Figure 22. Successive command posts.

43. ACCURACY. a. Reports must be accurate. They must state where, how, and when information was secured. No interpretation is made by reporting units.

b. Never accept reports of stragglers without verifications, not even if several tell the same harrowing story. The excitement of battle often results in the distortion of facts.

c. Check each message before it is sent by determining that it includes the essential items of WHAT, WHERE, WHEN. (See FM 21–75.)

d. Check coordinates for accuracy.

e. Also check each message for careless mistakes such as saying "north" for "south." Such mistakes can be made easily during the excitement or fatigue of battle.

f. When maps are available, all men must know the names of the important geographical features in order that locations can be accurately described. In the absence of maps, names may be assigned beforehand. Names should describe these features, for example, GREENTOP HILL, VILLAGE VALLEY, DEEP CREEK. When time permits, a terrain plot should be modeled according to the terrain of the expected operation—all members of the platoon memorize the lay of the land by study of the plot.

44. **TRANSMISSION OF INFORMATION.** Transmission of information is facilitated by standing operating procedure. This procedure establishes priorities which apply in the absence of specific instructions. The use of standing operating procedure simplifies orders and facilitates the transmission of essential information. Items of information which should be assigned priorities are:

a. Location and time of each enemy contact, giving strength, composition, and direction of movement of hostile forces. First contact with the enemy is especially important.

b. Number, type, location, direction, and speed of movement of enemy armored vehicles, airborne troops, naval combat, and landing forces.

c. Identification of enemy units.

d. Number, type, location, and direction of flight of hostile aircraft.

e. Condition and type of routes and bridges.

f. Location of mine fields, other obstacles, and contaminated areas, and routes by which they may be avoided.

g. Terrain features and conditions which may affect operations.

h. Location and movement of friendly troops.

i. Location of supplies.

SECTION VIII

SECURITY

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45. **GENERAL.** a. Security consists of the protective and warning measures adopted to prevent surprise, annoyance, observation, and interference.

b. The tasks of reconnaissance and security cannot be successfully combined. While a reconnaissance platoon provides some security when operating on a reconnaissance mission and can furnish information when functioning as security, it is necessary for a platoon to know definitely at all times whether the mission is of a reconnaissance or a security nature, and, if dual, which mission has priority.

46. **ADVANCE GUARD.** a. The mission of the advance guard is to insure the uninterrupted advance of the main body, to protect the main body against surprise and observation by hostile ground forces and from small arms fire, and to give the main body time and space to deploy. These missions are accomplished by—

(1) Reconnaissance to the front and flanks.

(2) Investigating possible positions where the enemy might be hiding.

(3) Attacking any enemy to drive him away if he is weak or to make him disclose his disposition if strong.

(4) Removing obstacles, repairing roads, and locating suitable bypasses around obstacles.

(5) Seizing or holding such terrain features as will facilitate successful execution of the plan of the main body.

b. When the reconnaissance platoon is acting as an advance guard it usually consists of a point and an advance party. Two ¼-ton trucks under control of a section sergeant may be the point while the rest of the platoon is the advance party. The point does not necessarily move in column; other suitable formations to conform with the terrain should be used. The advance party should move at supporting distance from the point and is responsible for maintaining contact with it. (See fig. 23.)

c. The point and advance party work as a team. The point pushes forward boldly, by bounds, closely followed and supported by the advance party.

d. Larger advance guards have a support. For example, when the battalion is marching in the presence of the enemy the platoon may be used as the point and advance party, while an element of a tank destroyer gun company is included in the support.

47. **PURSUIT.** The platoon may be the leading element of a force pursuing a retreating enemy. The platoon usually operates on the flanks of the retreating enemy, gains contact, and reports on the composition and direction of movement of hostile forces. Reconnaissance by the platoon must be pushed with vigor to penetrate the hostile reconnaissance screen in order to discover the enemy's actions.

48. **FLANK GUARD.** a. A flank guard is a security detachment for the protection of the flank of a marching force. If the reconnaissance platoon is assigned such a mission it may be accomplished by—

(1) Marching on a route parallel to the axis of advance of the main body.

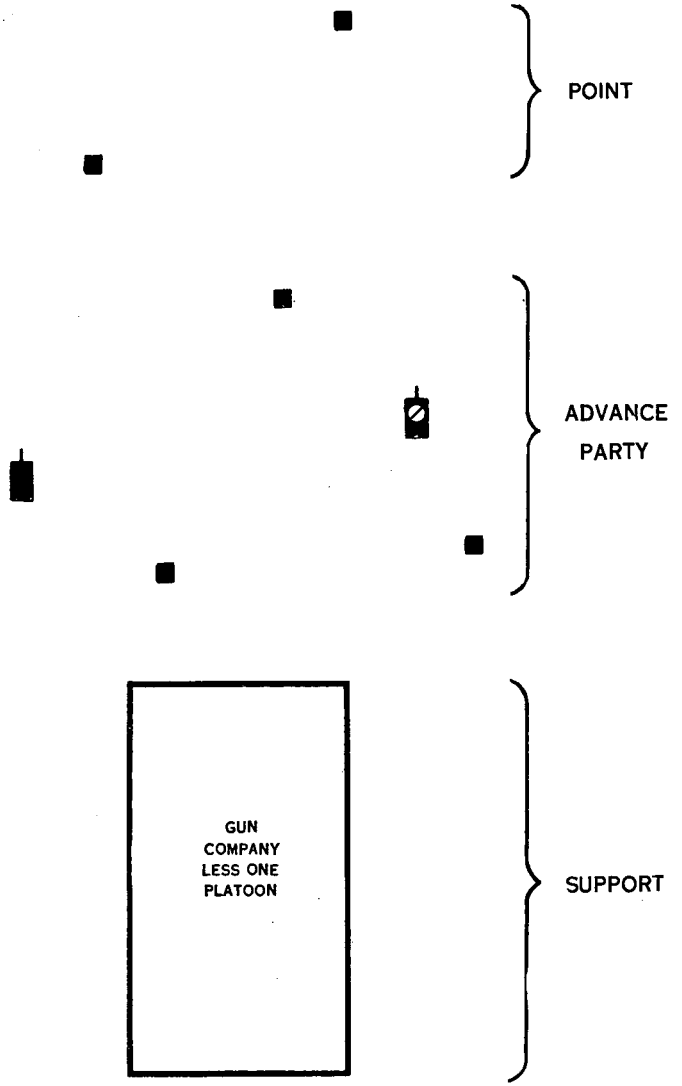


Figure 23. Reconnaissance platoon as advance party and point.

(2) Movement by leap-frogging to successive approaches by which the enemy can advance. (See fig. 24.)

b. When the terrain to a flank is open so that enemy tanks or infantry could approach from any direction, a flank guard marches parallel to the main body. Any dispersed formation, except line, is suitable.

c. Often the terrain is such that the enemy could move rapidly against the main body only by way of definite approaches along the route of march. Then the flank guard platoon moves by sections. One element covers an approach while the main body is passing. Concurrently the other section is moving to the next approach. High ground for observation should be occupied whenever possible.

d. During combat, the reconnaissance platoon may be assigned a mission of protecting a flank of the battalion or a gap between companies from an attack by foot troops. Such a mission is indicated only when the battalion has no other available means. The principles governing the selection of positions by the security section of a gun platoon will apply to a reconnaissance platoon preparing to meet foot troops. (See FM 18–20 or 18–21.)

49. **REAR GUARD** (fig. 25). a. The mission of a rear guard is to protect the main body from surprise, harassment and attack. The reconnaissance platoon is not ordinarily employed as a rear guard by itself, but may be attached to a rear guard gun element.

b. The reconnaissance platoon may be used to patrol to the flanks and rear to provide security for the major portion of the rear guard.

c. When the rear guard is engaged in fighting a delaying action, the reconnaissance platoon reconnoiters to one or both flanks to prevent surprise by the enemy. The rear guard retires to successive delaying positions by bounds and the recon-

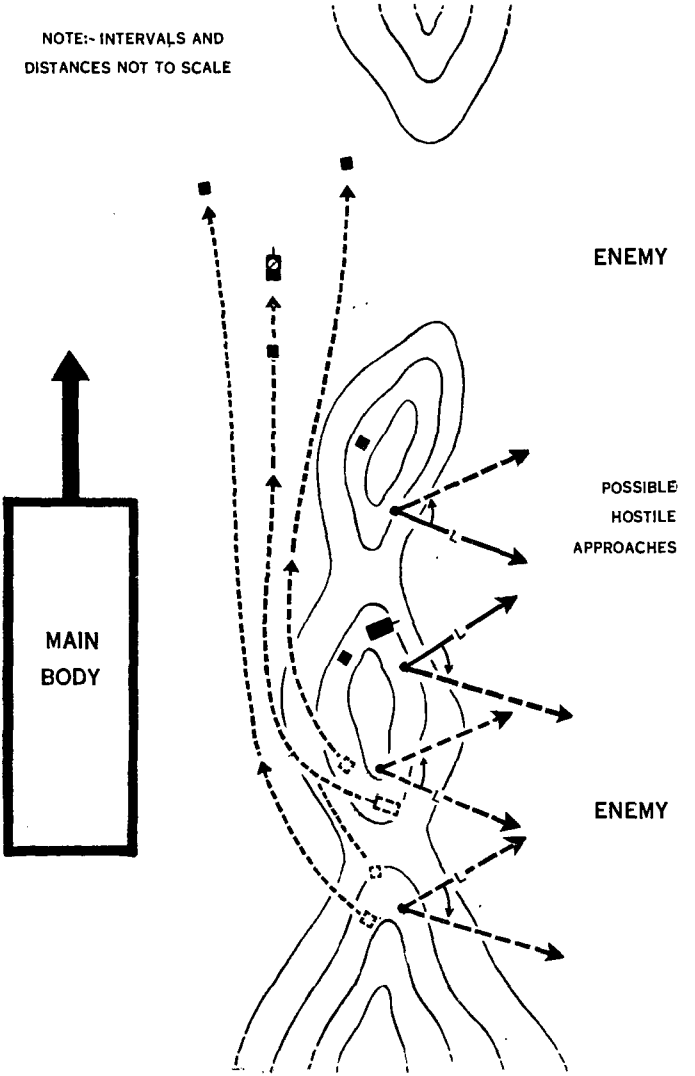


Figure 24. Flank guard. (Movement by leap-frogging.)

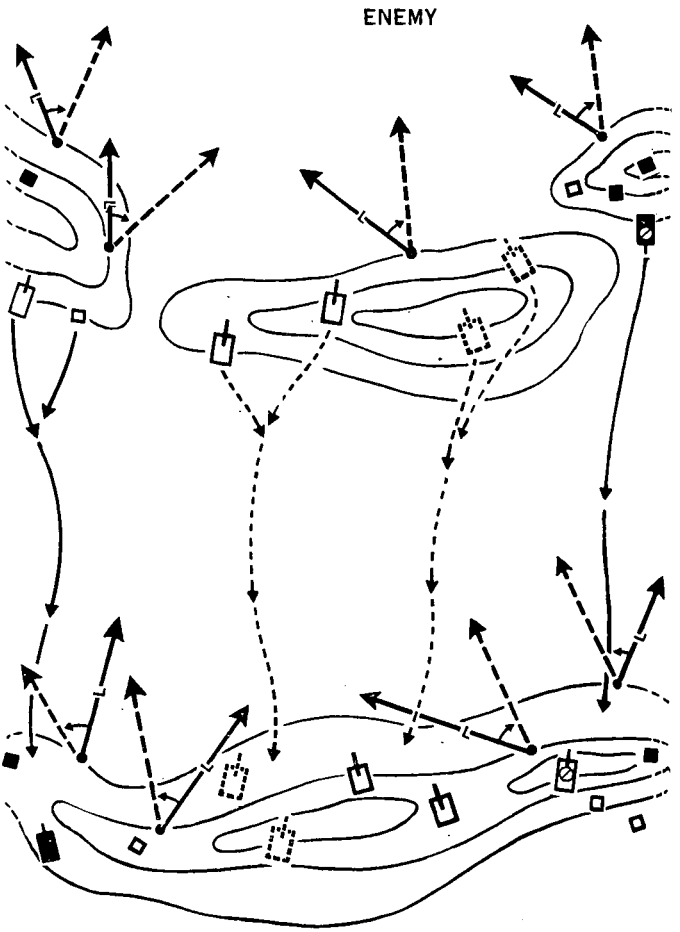


Figure 25. Rear guard. (Delaying action.)

naissance platoon withdraws correspondingly; unless otherwise ordered, the reconnaissance platoon maintains visual contact with the advancing enemy.

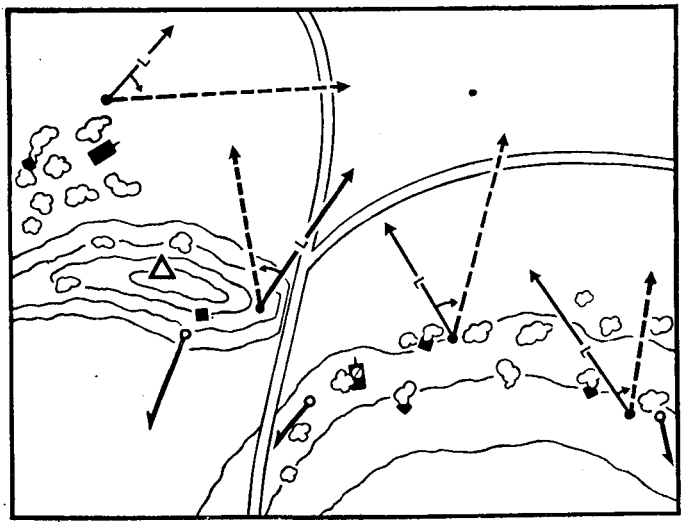
50. PLATOON OUTPOST (*fig. 26*). **a.** An outpost is a small group posted by a resting command or unit on the defensive to delay the enemy and give warning of his approach. Sometimes in small units the outpost, or if the unit is halted temporarily during a march, the march outpost, may consist only of outguards. An outguard is never less than two men and should be in sufficient strength to accomplish its mission. A section or an entire platoon may function as an outpost. The unit should be specifically instructed as to whether its mission is to delay or merely to warn. A means of communication must be established to give warning of an approaching enemy.

b. Observation is particularly important to keep the outguard itself from being surprised. Unobserved areas should be patrolled.

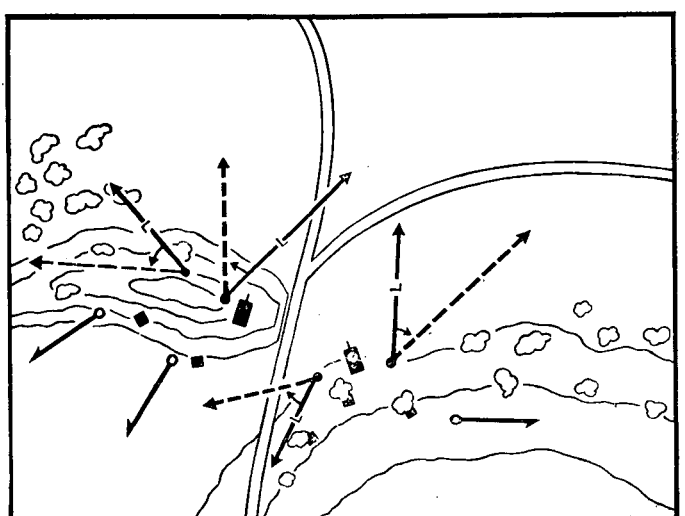
c. Most approaches cannot be covered by day and by night from the same position. Previously selected night positions are occupied immediately after dark. Daytime positions are reoccupied just before dawn. Observation at night is provided by listening posts placed well forward.

d. Outguard duty, like all reconnaissance platoon missions, demands continuous attention and alertness. A schedule of reliefs must be arranged for rest and feeding. Failure to provide or use such a schedule may result in failure to function properly when the enemy attacks.

51. LISTENING POSTS. a. Listening posts are occupied to detect enemy movement or activity when visibility is limited. Listening posts are placed near critical terrain features, such as crossroads, avenues of tank approach, bridges, and defiles. A location at night on low ground tends to sil-



① *Day outpost.*



② *Night outpost.*

Figure 26. Platoon outpost.

houette enemy movement against the sky. However, high ground often provides an excellent opportunity to hear enemy movements, or to observe them, especially on moonlight nights. Positions are chosen after a careful map study when prior terrain reconnaissance is impracticable. The actual site on the ground is reported accurately so that it may be used as a reference point when reporting information.

b. The position is approached by concealed routes. Concealment at the post should be available for both personnel and vehicles. Routes to vehicles should be known to all personnel in the event the post must be abandoned hurriedly. After occupation movement is limited.

c. A signal system or means of communication is established so that warning of approaching enemy may be given. Very pistol flares, ground flares, tracers fired in the air, whistle blasts, improvised gasoline flares, or radio communication are some means that can be used. Any hostile forces observed are reported as quickly as possible. Roving patrols, periodic inspections, or periodic reports by radio or messenger are employed to make sure the listening posts are still intact.

d. The degree to which the position is organized is dependent on the proximity of the enemy and the length of time the post is to be occupied. Noise making devices should be located in approaches to warn of hostile patrols; these devices may be brush or trip wires with tin cans attached, or ditches filled with water. The area within 50 feet of the post should be circled with wire, raised above the ground, to provide a secondary warning.

e. A listening post is composed of three or more men. Two men are always awake. Personnel who sleep should be near enough to be alerted without delay. Personnel must be able to recognize sounds at night in order to distinguish man-made sounds from natural ones. When the noise making devices warn of hostile approach, personnel of the listening post remain silent and allow the enemy to bypass the post.

However, when the post is discovered by a small hostile patrol, the enemy is killed or captured. When discovery is made by a large hostile patrol, the listening post personnel create as much confusion as possible, mount their vehicles, and withdraw to the unit they are outguarding.

52. PATROLS (fig. 27). a. In bivouac and also at other times, reconnaissance platoons may furnish patrols to supplement fixed security elements. Some missions are:

(1) Inspecting outguards and listening posts.

(2) Covering gaps between posts.

(3) Acting as bivouac sentinels.

b. Outguards and listening posts are inspected to see if they are functioning properly. When distances are such that the patrol cannot make the rounds on foot, a ¼-ton truck may be used.

c. Foot patrols may cover gaps between outguards or listening posts with the mission of detecting, and capturing or killing, if possible, enemy elements that are attempting to infiltrate into the area.

d. Two-man patrols within the bivouac area are effective for giving gas and air alarms, for enforcing blackout and other orders, and for capturing or killing any enemy personnel who have slipped into the area.

e. All members of patrols are prepared for night combat and must be familiar with the challenge, password, and reply of their own unit and, if necessary, with those of adjacent units.

53. COUNTERRECONNAISSANCE (fig. 28). a. Counterreconnaissance includes all measures to screen a command from hostile observation. Primarily, such a mission may be accomplished by preventing reconnaissance by the enemy's ground troops. The duties of the platoon are:

(1) To prevent hostile patrols from working through the screen.

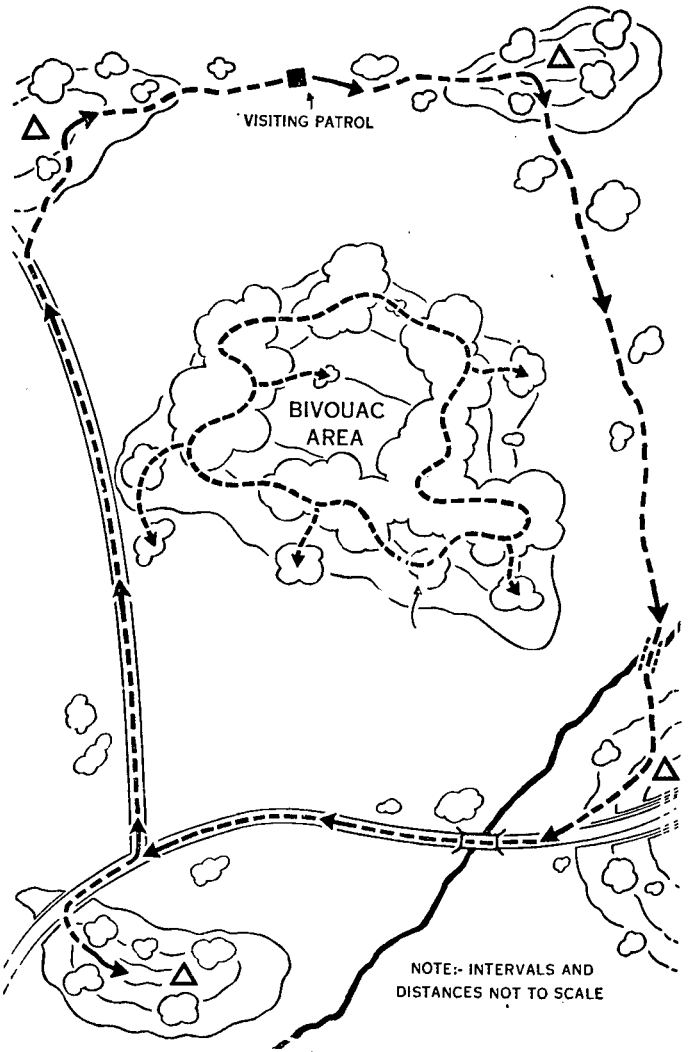
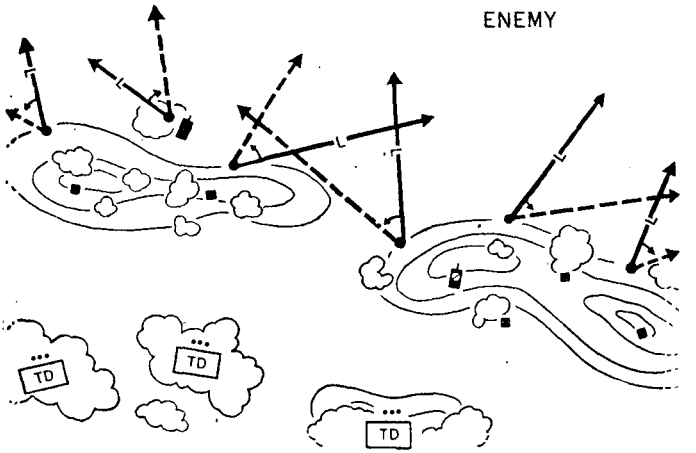
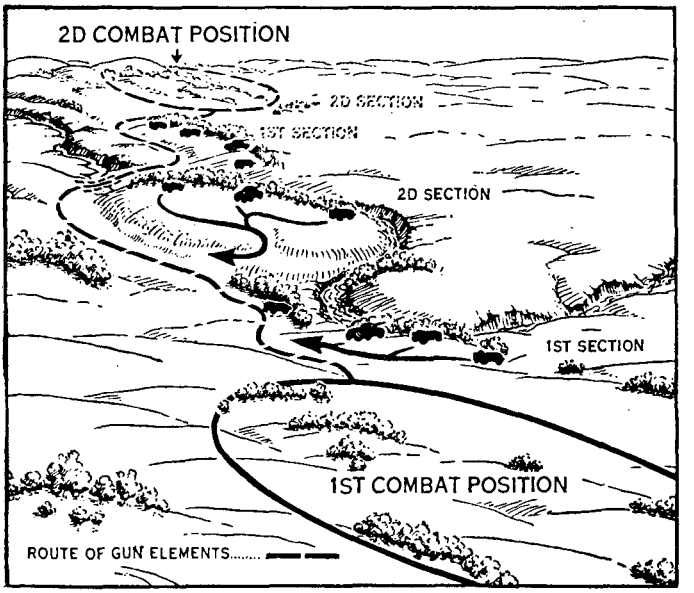


Figure 27. Route of visiting patrols.



① *Platoon as part of stationary screen.*



② *Platoon as leading element of moving screen.*

Figure 28. Counter-reconnaissance.

(2) To delay and give warning of a hostile penetration in force.

(3) To engage the enemy to prevent or limit his observation of a certain area or beyond a certain line.

b. The platoon may operate alone to stop small hostile reconnaissance elements. Contact with the enemy patrols is made as soon as possible. Small parties are destroyed or driven back at once. Delaying action is brought against larger reconnaissance patrols, the situation being reported immediately.

c. In other situations, the platoon may be attached to a gun company or platoon, constituting a strong counterreconnaissance element. Usually, in such a situation, the reconnaissance platoon operates in front of the gun element; it contacts enemy patrols and engages small ones. When the strength of the enemy patrol prevents the reconnaissance platoon from stopping it, the platoon maintains contact while the gun element destroys it.

SECTION IX

MINE FIELDS

54. **GENERAL.** a. FM 5–31 covers details of mine fields, their laying, detection, marking, and removal.

b. Reconnaissance platoons must be prepared by previous training to cope with mine fields which they encounter while engaged in reconnaissance work. The locating of mine fields is usually accomplished by using one or more of three methods:

(1) Visual inspection.
(2) Mine detectors.
(3) Probing.

55. **LOCATING MINE FIELDS.** a. The first detection of a mine field is usually by sight. A tracked vehicle with its tracks blown off or a badly wrecked wheeled vehicle may serve as the first indication that a mine field is in the vicinity. At times the marking system used to warn friendly troops can still be observed. One strand of barbed wire close to the ground or a small pile of stones are sometimes used to warn of mines. An observant, alert reconnaissance platoon should be able to detect the presence of enemy mines when performing reconnaissance work. (See fig. 29.)

b. After locating a mine field, once again visual inspection may be the means of locating the individual mines. If there has been a recent rain the outline of the mines often becomes quite apparent. It is usually impossible to bury a mine with-

out causing a difference in the color or texture of the ground. In some cases wind and rain may move the dirt and expose some of the metal of the mine and simplify locating it. Reconnaissance personnel, by constant practice, can soon develop a knack for detecting mines by eyesight alone.

c. The mine detector is an excellent device for locating metallic mines.

d. Mines may be located by probing; a bayonet or sharp rod is used to probe into the ground until the mine is actually felt. Only a small amount of training is necessary to acquaint personnel with the operation. The procedure is slow but is highly effective.

e. Reconnaissance platoons should receive special training in locating and neutralizing or removing booby traps. The enemy frequently make mine fields more difficult to remove by the installation of booby traps among the mines.

56. MARKING MINE FIELDS. a. Reconnaissance platoons always mark whatever mine fields they encounter. The standard engineer markers are shown in figure 30. When these materials are not available, improvised methods are used. It is advisable, when possible, to leave a sentry at the entrance to a mine field.

b. If the mine field appears to be quite extensive, reconnaissance platoons may find it necessary to locate or make and mark a gap through the field. This is particularly true where the mission of the reconnaissance elements lies beyond the mine field and the time element dictates immediate passage through the field. The efficient marking of a mine field by reconnaissance platoons may often prevent friendly troops from unknowingly entering a dangerous area.

57. PASSING THROUGH MINE FIELDS. a. Time permitting, mines are disarmed after location, but are seldom removed by reconnaissance platoons. When necessary to clear

Figure 29. Locating mine fields.

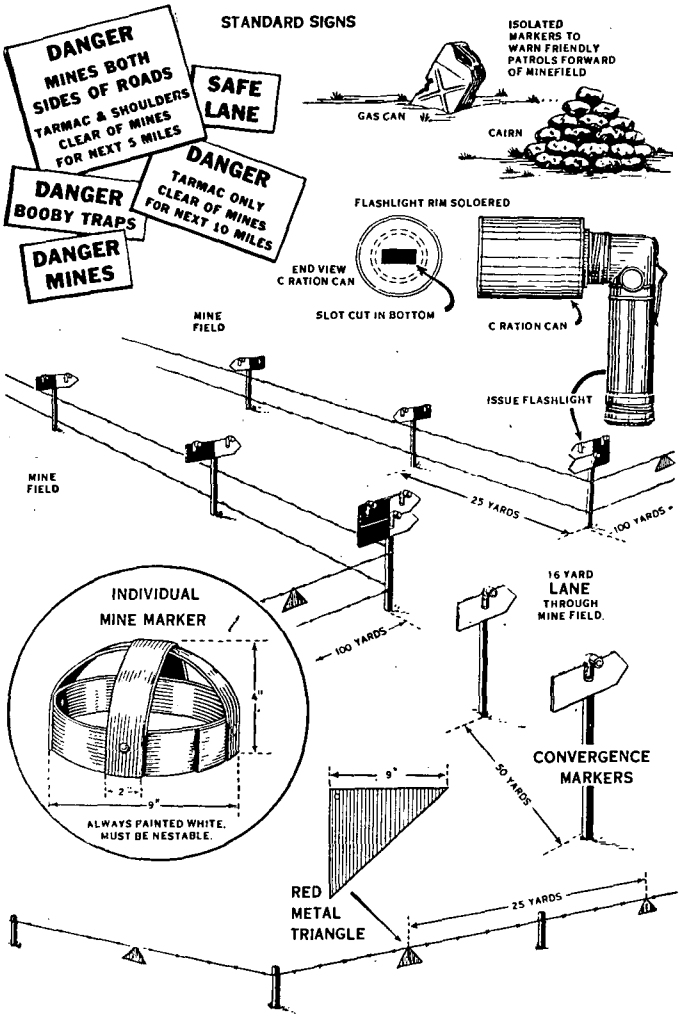


Figure 30. Mine field markers.

a gap through the mine field, the mines can be removed by attaching a long rope or wire to several mines and pulling them with an armored vehicle or by hand from behind cover. However, the reconnaissance platoon clears only gaps, not entire mine fields. For removal of mines, see FM 5–31.

b. Reconnaissance platoons should not allow themselves to become so absorbed in mine field location or removal that they lose sight of their mission. A reconnaissance platoon on a general zone reconnaissance may locate a mine field in detail. However, if the platoon's mission lies beyond the mine field the platoon gets across *without wasting time.* If time is pressing and difficulty is encountered in locating a gap, men can walk through the field to accomplish the mission.

58. REPORTING MINE FIELDS. The position of the mine field should be plotted as accurately as possible both as to width and depth. Speed and accuracy are the two characteristics desired in such a report and a radio message confirmed by a sketch may be used. In all instances, reports as to the definite location of the mine field should be given to the adjacent friendly troops as well as to the parent unit. Transient traffic in the area should be informed of the proximity of the mines whenever practicable.

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